











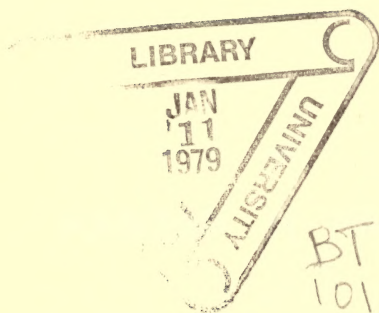
# DO WE NEED A NEW IDEA OF GOD?

BY

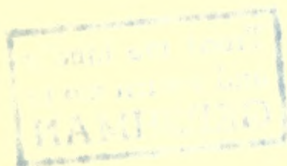
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## PREFACE

THAT there is need for a reinterpretation of life and a restatement of religious faith in the light of democratic outreach and impulse would seem unquestionable. There is a whole world of difference between the philosophy and world-view of the ages that gave us the historic creeds of Christendom and the philosophy and world-view of the present day. We live, indeed, in an entirely new world of thought; science has reconstructed the story of creation and written it anew in the language of the most thrilling romance, and democratic triumphs have gone far toward revolutionizing the social aims and conceptions of the world's politics. And yet in spite of these facts conventional religious teachers for the most part persist in proclaiming their message in the language and thought-forms of the early and darker ages, with the result that instead of interpreting life in a way that gives men courage and enthusiasm to face its responsibilities, the teaching of religion more often serves to confuse their thoughts, muddle their minds, and dissociate their common activity from the great life struggle of the universe.

If religion is to remain a vital force in the lives of

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men, some sort of a restatement of its leading ideas in the terms of democratic outreach and in harmony with the modern world-view is imperative, and any such restatement that does not show a vital relation between every man's heart throbs and the master struggle that has brought him to manhood must be pronounced inadequate. Both within and without the churches there is a growing dissatisfaction with conventional forms of credal belief and a consequent lack of reality in the forms of worship which depend upon them. Not only do many people not find spiritual inspiration, help, and vision in religious forms and services intended to promote these ends, but there are not a few who find themselves in a state of open revolt against what to them are the insincerities which a conventional worship forces upon them,—that many of these are people of true earnestness and passionate moral enthusiasm does but serve to make more serious the problem. That of the great number who own a nominal allegiance to their faith there are all too many who are insincere in the utterance of the beliefs which the creeds force upon them and repeat the most definite words of belief with all sorts of mental reservations is a most serious problem for the churches of Christendom to-day.

The author of this little book has sought to address himself as simply and directly as his subject permits to the growing multitude of men and women who find but little meaning in the conventional terms of religion and who are rather confused than helped by their use. He has sought to talk rather than write, as one might talk with a group of friends; and to

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make his words the more personal and direct he has deliberately thrown his arguments as far as possible into question form.

It is out of a sense of the need for a frank review of the sanctions of our common religious beliefs that the pages which follow have grown. The purpose of the book is, therefore, practical rather than controversial.

EDMUND HENRY REEMAN.

*January 18th, 1917.*



Treat me kindly  
and return me to  
**GERSHMAN**

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# DO WE NEED A NEW IDEA OF GOD ?

## CHAPTER I

A PROBLEM STATED—DO WE NEED A NEW IDEA  
OF GOD ? IS GOD OMNIPOTENT AND GOOD ?

CAN HE, DOES HE, INTERVENE ?

CAN we any longer conceive of God in the way we have been long accustomed to think of Him—Can we any longer believe in a God who is at once all-powerful and all-good—And, if we cannot, is there any way in which we can so re-shape our ideas of God that they may still provide a basis for a reverent, rational and inspiring religious faith ?

In other words, Do we need a new idea of God ?

The question is one not of mere philosophical interest, but one of vital importance to every intelligent person. Whether or not we can believe in God, and in what *kind* of a God we can believe, is a vital question for mankind and one with very definite and practical bearings upon the every-day problems of living. Moreover, the

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question as stated constitutes for an increasing number of minds one of the most profound problems of the present day, for it can no longer be denied that in the light of modern knowledge and the common facts of life very serious difficulties arise for all thoughtful minds in regard to our conventional conceptions of God.

The outbreak of the present War and the subsequent ruin that has laid waste so many fair cities and towns, lumbering its battlefields with their piles of dead and dying, has shattered for a multitude of minds a beautiful world of dreams and hopes in which with increasing confidence and expectation they had made their mental home for many years, and there are many who are finding themselves compelled to ask anew the old unanswered question—If God can do all things, as we have been taught to believe He can, and if He is good, how is it that He does not intervene to save mankind from such a debacle of disaster ? There are many also who feel that the great democratic uprising of the world cannot be without its effect upon our thought of God, and who are finding it increasingly difficult to reconcile the oligarchic and monarchial elements that predominate in our common God-ideas with modern democratic urge and impulse.

It will be plain to every rational mind that if we are ever to find a religious faith that can sustain us amid the vicissitudes of life and give

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## *A Problem Stated*

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us courage and strength to take our part as we should in life's struggles we must seek the foundations of such a faith in the facts of life, which facts we must interpret in harmony with our common knowledge. It is not merely a religious interest, but a moral duty to settle for ourselves whether or not the facts of life as we understand them agree with our thought of God, and if it should appear in the light of life's facts that God is other than we have been taught to think, to face the fact quite frankly and see what then remains to be said.

We need not be afraid of the question, nor of the problem which it states. God is what He always was; the Life-Force is what it always was. Our changing conceptions do not change realities. Howsoever we may define it to ourselves, the mysterious power whence all things proceed is what it is, and all that God as an actual reality, and not as a mere form of belief and doctrine, has ever meant to men He still means and must continue to mean. If any reader cannot see his way through the problems I am trying to state to a clearer and more vital conception of God than he has ever known, let him go on thinking of God in the way that is most helpful to him until he can. And if we all do that, sincerely, earnestly, and with a genuine desire to understand life and its great responsibilities aright, we shall be helping to

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make the sense of God what it must be if it is to be anything—a real and vital factor in our lives and in the life of our times.

The problem that faces us can perhaps be made most plain if we first of all remind ourselves what our common thought of God has been and largely still is, and then turn to some of the facts which constitute so serious a difficulty for many minds in regard to this common belief about God. The conventional idea of God can be sketched in a very few words. The majority of us who have received any religious training whatsoever have been taught to think of God as a transcendent divine being dwelling in some distant heaven and revealing Himself to men by special and miraculous revelations, of which the Bible is the chief. This God we have been taught to believe was the original creator of our life and the universe, and the way in which He created them is accurately told (or so at any rate it was for a long time believed) in the first chapters of the book of Genesis. He is a being of infinite wisdom, infinite power and infinite love, who desires above all else the good of mankind. At various times He has sought to prove this interest, and has proved it, by divers kinds of miracles and wonders that find no place in the common scheme of things. He can do anything that seems to Him good, and He is Himself supremely good. With

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the evil that exists in the world God is, and always has been, at war. He is a God, too, who is supremely anxious to save men from evil and to help them to overcome it, and He both can and has done this in a number of different ways.

Whatever else we may believe about God, it has been universally held throughout the Christian world that at least we must believe Him to be all-powerful and all-good. The things that perplex and annoy us and that are the chief cause of our temptations and the most fruitful source of our human problems have no power to worry or perplex God, who is superior in power and wisdom to the evil of the world and could, if He chose, wipe it all out of existence to-morrow. In former times, perhaps more than to-day, it was believed that God actually did intervene to overcome the evil of the world and to save men from death, destruction and disaster. In times of need He performed miracles that saved His chosen children and proved His power, and He is still the great intervening Providence of the world overruling for good and His own glory our mortal destinies. Our prayers and hymns to this day clearly show how fundamental these ideas have been, for they are full of ascriptions of almighty power and eternal goodness to God.

I do not think the case can be stated more simply than this, nor is it necessary to state it



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at greater length. I can appeal to my readers' own experiences for further elaboration. Is it not true that the chief things you have been taught to believe about God, and perhaps the things you have most naturally believed about Him, are that He is all-wise, all-powerful, and all-good ? God knows everything (knew from the beginning of time), can do everything, and is good. This, I say, is what people up to this time have commonly believed about God, and what at least a majority of religious people still believe. And it is what the writers of a very large part of our Bible also believed and taught about God. It is true, I believe, that all the Old Testament writers believed in a God who was able to intervene in human affairs, and who did so intervene. A good deal of our Old Testament, indeed, is taken up with the story of what were believed to be actual divine interventions.

So, then, we have as the most definite form of our common thought of God the idea of a being of unlimited power and goodness, able at any time to intervene for good in human affairs. It never occurs to the average man or woman that there can be any question about God's being able at any time to turn the world's evil to good account if He sees fit. And when they are confronted with some great problem that overwhelms them, they instinctively say—"Of course God could do the thing that needs to be done if He



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wished, but there's a reason why He doesn't and it's all right though we cannot understand it."

Now that is just the question that is uppermost in many minds to-day, Can God always do the thing that needs to be done? Is He a being of both unlimited goodness and unlimited power? Can He intervene in human affairs at will, as we have been taught to believe? Do the common facts of experience and knowledge justify or in any real sense confirm such a belief? Are we really on the right track at all in thinking about God in this fashion, or does the real truth about God and the world lie in another direction altogether?

Now it seems to me that the answer to all such questions must be sought and can only be found, if at all, in the facts of life and experience as we know them. In a case of this sort no theory can long satisfy us that does not actually square with the facts as known. A very simple way of approaching this matter is to ask the plain question, Is there any evidence in our common personal experiences that justifies this thought of God as a being of unlimited power able to intervene in our affairs? Has God ever so intervened in our behalf in any crisis of our lives? Is there any evidence, moreover, in our world to-day to justify this thought? Is God anywhere now intervening in human affairs in behalf of righteousness, as far as we are able to see?

Mark, please, that I am not asking whether

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there is any evidence in life of a power making for righteousness, but whether there is any evidence of direct intervention on the part of a being of unlimited power and goodness. Surely we may assume that the intervention of such a being would result in striking and startling effects that we could not easily miss, no matter how far from the scenes of our individual lives the act of intervention might take place. Has there been anything of which we know in recent times to which we might point as beyond all doubt an evidence of such direct divine intervention ?

What are some of the commonest facts of knowledge and life to-day as they relate to this thought of God ? Let us group some of the more important into two rough classes that we will call in the one instance physical facts and in the other moral facts. The terms are inadequate, perhaps, but they will serve our purpose. Under the first head let me remind you that the knowledge of the modern world presents a story of the world's origin and development that can hardly be said on the face of it to point very plainly to the thought of God as an intervening Providence exercising an unlimited power.

We know now as surely as we know anything that the world we inhabit was not created, as we were once taught to believe, in six days, nor in six thousand years of days ; and we know that as it now exists at least it was not created

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## *A Problem Stated*

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by the direct fiat of a transcendent God who had only to speak and the thing was done. Our world, science tells us, has been thousands upon thousands of years coming into being, and our common human history shows evidence of an evolution that is no less real than that which is traced in the rocks and sands and their fossil records. Life itself, the story of science affirms, has sprung from the simplest origins and has followed a long and laborious path of ascent, while nowhere in the whole process does there appear any evidence of anything in the nature of external intervention. It is from within, rather than from without, that life and things have taken their chief impulse. Now this is no fairy story, nor is it the fantasy of a few prejudiced minds. It is part of the common general knowledge and teaching of educated minds everywhere to-day. It is what our children are being taught in every reputable school and college throughout the land.

What is more we also know to-day, as surely as we know anything, that we are living in a universe wherein law reigns supreme. Not only is it seen that our world was evolved by a process of law and order, or, if you prefer yet more modern terms, by means of inward urge and impulse, but it is seen also to be governed by the inviolable necessities of cause and effect and maintained in its stability only by the fact that its laws permit of no deviation or intervention.

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For none of us to-day is practical life a matter of seeking divine and miraculous interventions and overrulings ; it is frankly and admittedly a matter of getting a right understanding of nature's laws and bringing ourselves and things into harmony therewith. In the case of an epidemic we do not usually start prayer meetings nowadays, though the custom is an ancient and approved one ; we get busy instead with sanitary and other conditions and find as a simple matter of fact that the results pay better.

Now I submit that these common facts of knowledge alone constitute a serious difficulty in regard to the conventional thought of God, and even to the thought of God that occupies a large part of our Bible ; a far more serious difficulty, I believe, than very many good people have yet recognized. For the simple fact is that between two such absolutely irreconcilable ideas as the newer scientific conception of life and the older theological thought of God there can be no compromise. And since it is impossible logically to believe both, we must choose one or the other.

If the scientific conception of things be true, or even approximately true, then it is plain, whatever may be the nature of God and the character of His relations with the world, that the older thought of God, which has been the main burden of the church's teaching, is mistaken and altogether misleading. God clearly cannot be at



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once an omnipotent transcendent being creating a world by word of mouth and an indwelling life force working through an evolution covering unnumbered centuries of time. Can we not all see the difficulty on this score? And is it not better that we face it frankly and with courage? The many attempts at a reconstruction of Christian theology having for their starting point an emphasis of what is called "The Divine Immanence," would indicate that something of this difficulty is being increasingly recognized by a growing number of the best religious teachers.

If now we turn to the other groups of facts, which I have named moral facts, it will be seen at once that the difficulty is greatly intensified. It can hardly be disputed that we have the right to expect of an Almighty being possessed of the power to do all things and by nature supremely good that He will use His power to overcome evil, to root it out from His world, and to further goodness by every possible means. We expect so much of men, can we expect less of God?

Now one of the simplest and plainest facts of life to-day is that there is everywhere evidence of a terrific struggle between what we call good and what we call evil. So real and intense is this struggle, moreover, that for most of us it would be an exceedingly difficult thing to say for certain which of the two apparently contending forces is really winning out, though, of course,

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we all believe and hope that the good will prevail. But on the face of it, it would seem that if the good is ever to win out in life we have got to get into the struggle and help to win its victory.

The present War has faced us with a conflict in which men and women are seen to be waging a life and death struggle in the interests of everything they hold to be precious, including the priceless heritage of the freedom of humanity's future. But so far there has been no evidence of any intervention on the part of an outside God possessed of unlimited power. And it would puzzle any man to say from any evidence we have so far received of His working which, if either side, God is on. And yet it cannot be that liberty, humanity, freedom and democracy mean nothing to God. And after all, this conflict, horrible as it is, does but serve to intensify a struggle that is all the time going on and in which the issues are no whit clearer. Do you mean to tell me that there is a God who could end it all to-morrow if He wished, but that He won't ? I cannot believe it, and if I could I do not think I should have much use for such a God anyhow.

It seems to me (assuming God to be what we have been commonly taught to believe He is) that the present circumstances of life, the actual hard facts as we know them and as they directly affect us, force us to one of four conclusions : Either God is good, but not omnipotent—that is,

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loves the good and wants to further it but is just about as helpless to sweep evil away at one stroke as we ourselves are; Or, that God is omnipotent, but not good—that is, has the power to destroy evil from the face of the earth, but not the will; Or, again, what we call good is not the real good as God sees it (which would mean, of course, that all our notions about good and evil are entirely mistaken and that we are quite in the dark as to what real goodness actually is); Or, fourthly, that God has no concern with mankind and no interest in what happens to us. For the life of me I can see no other alternative that will fit the difficulty, if we are to keep the essential elements of the older ideas of God. And since I cannot escape the thought of God and am compelled to believe that in the main humanity is not mistaken in its ideas of goodness, and since I cannot believe that a God exists who is indifferent to creation and the interests of mankind, I am forced to the one conclusion left, namely, that God is actually now doing the best He can and can't do better, and that in all the struggle His interests are as much at stake as humanity's. I believe that if God could end such things as the horror of war and destroy the world's evil to-morrow He would, and that the simple reason why He doesn't is that He can't. I can see nothing else to believe and still keep my sanity and rationality. Can you?



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I am aware it will seem to some that they have suffered an irreparable loss if the old thought of God goes. And yet when the old thoughts like the old days become things of the past we may regret them, we may weep over them and yearn for them to return, but still we must face the facts, and if we are ever to find any real purpose or meaning in life we must find it in the present. What we could believe yesterday matters not, everything depends upon what we can seriously and unfeignedly believe to-day.

I say I know it will seem to some that if God is not the transcendent and omnipotent being in whom they have believed then there is left no God at all in whom they can trust or believe. But are you sure of that? Do not be too hasty in thinking it. May it not be that there is still room for faith in God—a new kind of faith in a new kind of God, in which your soul will ultimately find even greater treasures of spiritual riches than you have known in the past? A faith in which you may find not only a new sense of confidence in life, but a new inspiration to duty, a new basis for effort, and a new and more glorious promise of reward? A new kind of faith, I say, in a new kind of God, which while it will not make the struggles of life any the less intense will cause your life to shine with a wondrous new meaning and give to everything that you can

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do a wondrous new importance—may not that be possible ?

Suppose ! Suppose God is not and never was the transcendent divine being beyond the clouds we and some of the old worthies who wrote large parts of our Bible have thought He was. Suppose God did not create the world by word of mouth or at one stroke, as we have seen there is reason to think that He did not. Suppose He never has intervened from without in the world's affairs, and that some of the old miracles which are recorded in our Bible are simply the stories of early, simple, unsophisticated and superstitious peoples about things that seemed strange and unnatural to them but that would seem far less strange to us if they happened now, and that others of them are simply the effects of causes we have not yet understood but that will presently be explainable. Suppose, instead of God being a remote and transcendent being, who created the world at the start and has only occasionally intervened in its working since, He is the indwelling life of the universe, of the remotest star and sun as well as of our planet—the indwelling life of the clod as well as the soul, the spirit working, as Paul put it, in and through all things.

Suppose God is the eternal life force that has been working from the beginning of beginnings and that He created this universe, or rather brought it forth, like a child born of a mother's

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travail, as a means to His own self-expression, self-understanding and self-realization. Suppose this universe is as much a necessity to God as the thought of a God is to us. Suppose all the struggle of life, sentient and insentient, is God's own great struggle and outreach after a fuller existence. Suppose all the struggles of the past and all the early and perished monsters of sea and land are part of one great movement on the part of a life force in which all that the world has since become was latent and inherent from the start, and that these things represent, as George Bernard Shaw has suggested, its first experiments and its cruder efforts. Suppose God never has been the denizen of a distant heaven at all, but has always been, so to speak, the God of a great universal workshop. Suppose modern man with his great democratic strivings and his new-born social consciousness represents the highest that God, the workman, has thus far been able to accomplish. Suppose that you and I are God in a deeper, truer, profounder sense than the church has ever affirmed Jesus was, and that all our truest instincts and deepest feelings, our hopes and dreams and visions, are God's own urge and outreach in us. Suppose God is, as H. G. Wells puts it in "The Research Magnificent," the "Immortal Adventurer" in you and in me. Suppose we are the instruments and medium through which God is even now seeking

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## *A Problem Stated*

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to win larger victories for Himself and to make possible a yet more glorious consummation for creation, as the dead mammoths of the past and all the life now fossilized in the rocks were the medium of earlier effort in the same direction.

Suppose it is upon the brain and mind, the emotion and will which God has brought to being in us, that He depends for the greater life that is to be, and of which we sometimes think we have caught glimpses. Suppose what God needs is not our prayers, our incense, and the easy homage of our lips, but our brain, our blood, our will, our life. Suppose all that we see to-day, and all that history reveals and all that the past that lies behind history hides, is the process by which divine life is unfolding itself—a divine life of which the fairest, noblest things we know are the inmost essence and the glorious possibility. Suppose it is only by means of this mighty struggle in the midst of which we are set that the goodness we associate with the thought of God can be brought to victory and power.

Suppose all this, I say, and is there then no ground for a new kind of faith in a new thought of God? Suppose all this, and is there not visible at once a new meaning in all the struggle and travail of life? A God fighting out His battles and needing all the help that we can give to win the victory—would not that be for every true man an incentive to high living and noble effort

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as strong as any that has ever been urged in the name of religion ? Suppose all this, I say, and would not democracy and every noble movement and holy aspiration among men to-day have a new significance ? Then would democracy be no longer a mere political experiment, but a mighty new uprising and outreach of the spiritual life force of the universe ; then would every noble movement of modern times relate itself to all the struggle of the past and serve both to justify and to explain it ; then would every man's life cease to be a dim mystery and a vague indefinable purpose and would be seen at once as a sublime opportunity for co-operation with God Himself, and as an integral part of the fabric of the future.

Suppose all this and there would no longer be any conflict between religion and science and no great confusion of mind among men as to which of the two is to be trusted and followed. Suppose all this, I say, and religion and science would be mutually confirming voices pointing to " One God, One Law, One Element, and One Far-Off Divine Event to which the whole creation moves."

Suppose ! Suppose all this, I have said. But is not the supposition highly probable and reasonable in the light of what we have seen is the common testimony of science and knowledge concerning the origin of things, and in the light, too, of the stupendous problems, moral as well



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as physical, that are left unanswered upon our hands by the older thought of God? Suppose, I have said. But I believe that it is along the lines of some such thought as this that the world will yet find its way to a new and more vital faith in God and to a new understanding of life and life's meaning and purpose; and it is along the lines of some such thought as this, I believe, that religion must needs be restated before it can ever again be a compelling and sustaining power in the lives of men. In the light of such a thought of God as this, theology, reshaped, would become an actual interpretation of life as it is and religion would find that glorious rebirth for which its devoted followers are forever interceding.

And, I venture to believe that religion, appealing to men from the high standpoint of such a thought of God and in the terms of the challenge which such a thought constitutes for every one of us, would find a new response in the hearts of men the world over. Men who to-day turn indifferent from appeals to save their own souls from the doom of a hell in which their intelligence can no longer believe as either just or rational would feel in the challenge to give their lives to the furtherance of a great divine struggle a new appeal, and in the task of joining forces with God in carrying creation to a yet more glorious consummation a new and thrilling joy.

I have listened sometimes as men have sung

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their hymns to God and have fancied I could trace an earnestness and a wistfulness of longing as they have sung of the glorious golden city pictured by the seers of old, and a mighty intense yearning and outreach as the words have followed :

“ We are builders of that city,  
All our joys and all our groans,  
Help to rear its shining ramparts ;  
All our lives are building stones.  
Whether humble or exalted,  
All are called to task sublime ;  
All must aid alike to carry  
Forward one sublime design.

“ And the work that we have builded  
Oft with bleeding hands and tears,  
Oft in error, oft in anguish,  
Will not perish with the years :  
It will live and shine transfigured  
In the final reign of right ;  
It will pass into the splendours  
Of the City of the Light.”

And this is literally true, if this thought of God be true. It is such a thought of God I commend to my readers, not as the new dogma of a priest or theologian, but as the earnest thought of a fellow struggler in the maze of life's great problems, and as the only real alternative to the thought of a God omnipotent and good but inactive in the face of the world's great need. It is to such a thought of God that the pages which follow are intended to give further consideration.



## CHAPTER II

### GOD AND MAN—ARE THEY ONE ?

THE relation existing between God and man has always been regarded as of profound importance for religious thought, and the effort of religious teaching has been very largely devoted to a clarification and vitalization of our conception of this relation. Some sort of a relationship between God and man, moreover, has always been assumed by religious belief. The relationship has been variously defined but has never been questioned, and without a sense of this relationship it has been generally held that no such thing as religious experience is possible. Now it is plain that our conception of the nature of the relationship existing between God and man depends primarily upon our conception of God Himself. Any radical change in our thought of God must necessarily result in a corresponding change in our conception of the nature of the relation existing between God and man.

If, therefore, the suppositions of the preceding chapter are to stand—if God is to be conceived

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not as a transcendent being intervening from without in human affairs, but as the indwelling Life-Force of the universe—they cannot be without effect upon our thought of the relation between God and man, and the question which heads this chapter becomes a vital and important one.

God and man—are they one ? But what does the question mean ? Apparently it may mean one of two things. It may mean, Is man himself God ? Is there no God beyond man ? Is the sum of all that we mean by the word God actually embodied in man as he now exists, as he has existed, or as he may yet exist in the future ? Or, it may also mean, Is there a direct and identifying relation between God and man ? Are they one in effort, in struggle, in outreach, in purpose ? Is it through man that God seeks to work out the larger destiny of the universe ? And from either standpoint we are evidently approaching the thought of God and the problem of faith from a point of view which, if not strictly new, is at least revolutionary as compared with the standpoint from which this problem has been commonly discussed by religious teachers and theologians generally.

It was the underlying assumption of the previous chapter that a real working faith in God can only be found in, and built up from, our actual experience of life in the broadest general sense. That is to say, it is in the common facts of human

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experience all the world over and in all ages that we must find the only solid foundation upon which to rest an enlightened and sustaining faith in God and in His relations with men. If we cannot find the evidence for God, and for a vital relationship between God and man, in the facts of life, as they are now known and understood, it is useless to look for evidence elsewhere, since it can avail us nothing even should we find it. Any theory we may have in this matter, like any theory we may have in any other matter, can only be real and helpful as it serves to correlate and explain the facts of ordinary existence as they force themselves upon our attention. What would be the use in talking about a good God who is on the side of man, for example, if in the common facts of experience we could find no evidence of such goodness and no evidence of any other power than ourselves. In such circumstances such a belief would be no more helpful than as though a man persisted in believing in spite of all evidence to the contrary that two and two make not four, but five, or that fire will not really burn. This is only to say, of course, that in our religious theories, as in every other department of our thought, the theories must fit the facts and not violate, contradict, or set them aside.

Let us, therefore, try to face quite frankly some of the common facts of life as they relate

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to the general subject before us, and to the question of this chapter in particular. We are talking about God and man and asking the question, Are they one ? Before we can answer this question in any satisfactory fashion we must needs ask another. We know something at least about man—What do we really know about God ? What do we as individual men and women, as common ordinary mortals, actually know about God ?

There are some, of course, who would answer at once, “ Oh, we have been taught to believe so and so about God, and such like and so forth. For example, we have been taught to believe that God is the creator of the world and that He is good and kind, just and righteous.” Yes, I know all that. But I am not asking what we have been taught to believe, or even what we feel we can believe. I am asking the simple pointed question, What do we *know* about God ?

We know that Brighton is some fifty miles south of London, for example. We know that the Nelson monument occupies a certain position in Trafalgar Square. We know that Mr. Lloyd George is at present Prime Minister, which office was formerly held by Mr. Asquith. We know that the Magna Charta granted by King John to the barons, is regarded as the basis of the English constitution. We know that the moon is a secondary planet or satellite of the earth. We

know that water is a colourless compound of hydrogen and oxygen in the proportion of two parts to one. We know that fire burns and destroys inflammable material.

Some of these things we know by direct acquaintance. We have possibly burned our fingers, more than once. We have probably travelled between Brighton and London. Others of these things we know by other means. They are all what we may call simple facts of common knowledge. Most people are already familiar with them. Any one who is not familiar with them at this moment may easily become so by taking the necessary steps to secure the information. They are also the kind of simple facts upon which we are wont to base our ordinary daily life and by which we regulate our daily affairs. The destructiveness of fire explains our elaborate devices for fire protection. The distance between London and Brighton fixes the running time of our train service based upon the speed capacity of steam engines. If we had never been taught to believe anything about geography we could find out for ourselves the distance between London and Brighton—we could walk it for that matter, if we so desired, and measure the distance for ourselves as we went. Do we know any such simple, common facts about God? Are there any similar simple facts about God which we know and which we might



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have acquired even if we had never been taught to believe anything about God—simple facts known to everybody, or open to everybody's knowledge ?

Is it not true that there have been all sorts of different ideas and beliefs about God that have prevailed at various times in human history, and that there are all sorts of differences existing among men to this very day as to the nature, character and existence of God ? Did you ever hear of there being all sorts of different opinions and beliefs about the distance between London and Brighton ? What is it that puts this question of the distance between these two points beyond the range of any possible dispute ? Is it not simply the existence of plain, concrete, verifiable facts of common knowledge ? If a man came to us to-morrow and said, "I have a new theory of the distance we are talking of. I am convinced that it is five hundred miles from London to Brighton," we should laugh at him. Why ? Would it not be simply because we know better ?

Is there anything about God, I ask, then, that we know in the same positive way—as a simple, concrete, verifiable fact ? Let us try for a moment to put all question of beliefs, reasonable or unreasonable, aside, and think seriously about it. Do we *know* as a matter of simple, concrete, verifiable fact that God created the world, or



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that God is good and kind, just and righteous ? Do we ? You will see what I am driving at in a moment, but let us face the question now. Do we know of any such fact ? Could we prove the statement that God created the world if it were disputed—prove it, I mean, not as a matter of probability and inference, but beyond all possible doubt or dispute, as we could prove the distance between two English cities ? Has this simple statement of common belief ever been so proved ? Mark, please, I am not arguing that it may not be true. I am simply asking, Do we know it to be true and can we prove it, as a simple fact ? Can it be thus known and proved by any one, even by those with a better general knowledge of facts than any one of us as individuals may possess ?

Let us ask also a further question. By what possible means that we can conceive could such a knowledge be come at by us ? There are just two ways it seems to me by which such a knowledge as we are talking of could be come at. It could be revealed to us, supposing God to be what we have been commonly taught to believe He is ; or, it could be discovered from the facts of ordinary things as these are known and proven. We might learn by actual experience or experiment that God was the creator of the world and that He is good and kind, just as we learn by actual experience and experiment that fire burns

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—Or, God Himself might let us into the secret of things in some such way as would furnish the definite knowledge we are inquiring about. But in the latter case it is plain that we should need to be very careful to be quite sure that it was God who was letting us into the secret.

Now it has been claimed by a great many very good people that this is the way our knowledge of God has come to us, and that we can therefore be quite sure about it on that account. Man, they say, could never have discovered God for himself, so in order that man might know God, God actually did reveal Himself to man. This statement, indeed, has been one of the commonest beliefs among men almost everywhere, and it is worth while in passing to point out that the way in which God revealed Himself has been very differently conceived at different times and by different peoples.

Various persons of ancient times have been believed to be the medium of special divine revelations, from Moses and the Hebrew prophets to the Buddha, Jesus, and Mahomet. And all sorts of people from Emmanuel Swedenborg to the Mormon Joseph Smith have claimed to be the subjects of special divine inspiration. Nearly all the great religions of the world, indeed, and not a few minor sects, have taught that God is revealed in the lives and utterances of certain different prophets, though it is singular that the prophet

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who by one religion and sect is acclaimed a revealer of God is quite frequently discredited by another. Thus while the Buddhists fervently believe that Gautama Buddha revealed God, not a great many Christians can be found who agree with them; and as for Mahomet he is less capable than the Buddha of commanding the agreement of the Christian world in the matter of his supposed revelations of the divine will. The adherents of that romantic modern movement, the Bahai movement, again, believe that the Bab was a revealer of God specially commissioned in the light of modern needs, but while they have succeeded in convincing a considerable number of Orientals that this is so, they have not succeeded in converting any very large number of Christians to their view, though they have a few.

All of these facts are surely worthy of note and are significant in relation to our subject. So far, however, as the Christian world is concerned there has always been a certain rough agreement about this matter of a revealed and revealing God, and it has been generally taught and believed in Christian lands that we have in the Christian Bible a full, complete and perfect revelation of God to man, so that everything a man needs to know about God can be found, it is often alleged, in the Bible. Now this, it would seem, simplifies the matter quite a little and at least gives us something definite to work upon.

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God, it is suggested, is not a discovery of man's, but our knowledge of God has been revealed to us in the Bible, and in the Bible, therefore, it may be assumed, we may find the simple facts about God we are seeking.

But once more it must be noted that this has been the common *belief* in Christian lands. The Bible, it is *believed*, contains the necessary information for man's knowledge of God. It is not, however, a simple, concrete, verifiable fact that the Bible *is* God's revelation ; it is at most a matter of belief, and, as most of my readers will be aware, even this belief, common as it is, is not altogether general and has been called in question many times. Even yet there is no definite agreement, at least between Catholics and Protestants, as to what books constitute authoritatively the Bible. Martin Luther had grave doubts about certain scriptural books that now find a place in the canonical Protestant Bible. The Apocalypse he considered neither apostolic, nor prophetic ; and the Epistle of James, for very obvious reasons, he characterized as an "epistle of straw." In the same way he did not believe that Jude's epistle proceeded from an apostle, but believed that it had been taken from Peter and had been only poorly extracted at that, which fact for him gave it a lower place than its supposed original. Zwingli, also, another great reformer, doubted the Biblical worth of the



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Apocalypse. Even John Calvin had his doubts about the Pauline authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Modern Biblical scholarship, and especially the "Higher Criticism," has, moreover, completely revolutionized our ideas as to the literary nature of the books of the Bible and the method of their growth. The Pentateuch is no longer accepted as the work of Moses, and scholars of all churches are learning to speak instead of a Hexateuch which is admittedly a most complex composite work. Says Dr. Driver, a canon of Christ Church, Oxford, "Even though it were clear that the first four books of the Pentateuch were written by Moses, it would be difficult to sustain the Mosaic authorship of Deuteronomy. For, to say nothing of the remarkable difference of style, Deuteronomy conflicts with the legislation of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers in a manner that would not be credible were the legislator in both one and the same."\*

In 1875 Dean Stanley, speaking in Westminster Abbey at the funeral of Sir Charles Lyell, the great geologist, said: "It is now clear to all students of the Bible that the first and second chapters of Genesis contain two narratives of the

\* "Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament," p. 77.

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creation, side by side, differing in almost every particular of time, place, and order."

And in 1887 Prof. C. A. Briggs wrote: "There are no Hebrew professors on the continent of Europe, so far as I know, who would deny the literary analysis of the Pentateuch into the four great documents. ('J,' 'E,' 'D,' and 'P.')

The professors of Hebrew in the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, and Edinburgh, and tutors in a large number of theological colleges, hold to the same opinion. A very considerable number of the Hebrew professors of America are in accord with them. There are, indeed, a few professional scholars who hold to the traditional opinion, but these are in a hopeless minority. I doubt whether there is any question of scholarship whatever in which there is greater agreement among scholars than in this question of the literary analysis of the Hexateuch."\*

And says Prof. George T. Ladd, "With very few exceptions anywhere, and with almost no exceptions in those places where the Old Testament is studied with most freedom and breadth of learning, the whole world of scholars has abandoned the ancient tradition that the Pentateuch, in such form as we now have it, was the work of Moses."†

\* *Presbyterian Review*, April, 1887, p. 340.

† "What is the Bible?" pp. 299-300.



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And yet again, to make a final quotation, Dr. Washington Gladden asserts that "The sin and the crime of driving men from the doors of the churches are to be charged very largely upon the religious teachers who, with the light of this decade blazing all around them, continue to make statements about the Bible which a very little careful study of the Bible itself will prove to be untrue. . . . The first thing that we need to learn is what the Bible is not. It is not an infallible book."\* And then he goes on categorically to deny the scientific and the historical infallibility of the Bible in so many words.

So that we see that here again what we have is not a simple fact—that the Bible is God's revelation—like the fact that fire burns, but a mere belief, and one that is apparently rapidly losing its hold upon intelligent and educated minds. If the Bible does give us, as some have claimed and still claim, a complete knowledge of God and if it be offered to us as God's own revelation, then it certainly cannot be denied that we have every right, indeed, that it becomes a solemn duty, to assure ourselves that it is actually what it is believed to be. Unless we can assure ourselves of this, indeed, then we cannot be sure of any of the things which it relates or of any of the information which it gives, at least not as simple facts

\* "How Much is Left of the Old Doctrines ?" p. 790.

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about God. In the light of many common statements about the Bible one of the first questions we should be compelled to ask ourselves would be, How did we get the Bible, then ? And if any one should answer, "It was inspired—inspired by God," then we should have to say, Are you sure ? How do you know ? How was it inspired ?

Do you see, we are back again at the old interminable questions. Can it be proved as a simple fact that God inspired the Bible in miraculous fashion ? Clearly none of the facts of modern Biblical scholarship confirm the theory that the Bible is a miraculous revelation of God inspired in some unique way for the sole purpose of making God known to men. Beyond all question the Bible stands supreme in the realm of religious literature, but equally certain is the fact that scientific study and investigation have shown that in the circumstances of the times to which the several books of the Bible belong there is ample to account for their growth on a purely rational basis. It is now abundantly plain, I think, that the Christian Bible is as much a product and outgrowth of the moral and spiritual evolution of the human race as the more material conditions of our present social environment are a product of social evolution. In its several books, indeed, there is clearly revealed for all who have eyes to see the various stages of the evolution through

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which the moral and religious consciousness of the Jews has passed.

Call the Bible, if you will, a revealing book. And I will not dispute that it reveals clearly enough what some of the great beliefs of great men have been about God, and something also of the effects of these beliefs in the lives of men and nations ; but for myself I cannot find that the Bible reveals any such simple facts, concrete and verifiable as the fact that fire burns, about God or the method of His creative activity or the exact nature of His present relations to the world and to men.

I love the Bible and find sublime inspiration in some of its sublimely inspiring passages, but I do not find all the Bible equally inspiring, nor equally profitable. I find sublime truth in the Bible, but in the main it is truth of the moral principle sort, and not simple fact of the sort we are now discussing. And I cannot help thinking that if God Himself had directly inspired the Bible to be a complete and authoritative revelation of Himself to men it would have been a very different book. I find that while the Bible does tell me at least two entirely different stories of how early peoples at one time believed the world was created, it does not anywhere tell me how God actually did it, or if God did it at all. And if I am to possess any exact knowledge of how the world was made and of the nature of God's relations to men and

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the character of His present activity in life I must confess I am compelled to seek it elsewhere than in the Bible ; since, while some of the Bible conceptions about God are highly reasonable, others of them are just as unthinkable and quite incapable of being squared with the vital facts of life as we now know them.

For myself, therefore, I am compelled to turn to the only other way I can conceive by which such a knowledge of God as we are seeking may possibly be attained. In a word, to the possibility of discovering it in the common facts and experiences of life as they relate to my own being and as they affect the world at large. And here let it be said that if God does really stand in any definite relation to mankind and the world, it would surely seem reasonable to suppose that in the common facts and experiences of life there will be some clear indication of what that relation is. If I pull a watch to pieces and use my brains I cannot very well miss seeing what the relation of the mainspring is to the rest of the works. And if, metaphorically, I pull the universe to pieces I am almost certain, it seems to me, to discover whether or not it has a mainspring, and what sort of a mystery it is. I may still find it a mystery to say where it came from in the beginning, but I do not think I shall easily miss the fact that it is there.

The whole case for belief in God and the fact



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that makes me supremely anxious to understand, if I can, God's relations with men, is just this—that when I pull the universe to pieces I find it, not indeed a mechanism with a mainspring, but a living organism with a vital life principle, and this life principle I name God, though if we can sense in any degree the reality, the name we give to it perhaps matters little.

I find as I study human history and human faith that the world's religious faiths have this common characteristic, that in one way or another they are invariably linked with the attempt of the human mind to get to the bottom of its own existence and at the real root forces of the world's life. This in spite of the fact that the conceptions of God which find shape in them plainly reflect an evolution of human thought and are evidently very largely, if not entirely, the outgrowths of the times to which they belong. Men do not fashion and never have fashioned ideas of God as a mere holiday amusement ; they do it in order to explain as best they can the nature of the universe and the truth about themselves. It is this fact more than anything else that gives me strong confidence to seek the truth about God and His relations with men in the actual facts of life. I feel (I cannot help but feel) that if there be a God in the world at all then the facts of life will reveal Him more certainly than anything else. It is as easy, of course, to theorize here as else-

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where, but we do not want to theorize until we cannot help it, and when we do, we want the theory to explain the facts as fully as possible.

Now what are some of the facts of life and the universe as they relate to the discovery of God ? I can only, of course, touch upon a few of the more important. The simplest, and as I think most obvious, fact is, that man himself is a part of the universe. Not only are we dependent upon the universe for our means of subsistence, for daily bread and water and the simplest material necessities of our frame, but we are absolutely dependent upon its laws for every fundamental condition of our existence. The simple fact is, such creatures as we are could not conceivably exist in anything but this material universe. We belong to it by birth and by existence. We see now, if science is to be believed, that our beings have evolved in it and out of it.

And, so far as our own world at any rate is concerned, we are sure of another fact, which is that the universe has accomplished something peculiar and extraordinary in us that is nowhere else being repeated. We are self-conscious beings ; that is, we not only are what we are, but we know we are. Higher than this our world has not gone. There are mightier and perhaps more magnificent things in the world than man—the tides and the oceans, the waves and the winds, not to speak of the mountains and hills and rocks,



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but there is nothing more self-conscious than man. Nowhere else in this world does mind manifest itself so fully as in man. The winds may sing in the trees and lash the waves to angry foam, but neither winds nor waves, mountains nor rocks can pen poems, or chronicle the history of their doings, or reflect upon the subtle intricacy of their own motives.

Whatever it is that is working behind the scenes of life it clearly realizes something in man that it realizes nowhere else in this world. If it were only a blind force behind everything at least it would have to be said that in man it partially loses its blindness and rises to some measure of sight and vision, and understanding. So, then, it is seen that man, being a part of the universe, is himself also at least a partial explanation of the universe and one means to its explanation. Whatever else the universe may or may not be driving at, and even if it be driving at nothing conscious at all, it has produced us. You cannot understand the universe apart from man, nor can you understand man apart from the universe. With his tendencies and destiny, if man has a destiny at all, the universe is inextricably bound up, and so is man, with whatever destiny may lie ahead for the universe.

Do you see what this means ? It means surely that since man and his consciousness are a part of the universe, human perception and intelli-

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gence are dependable as far as they go. We have the right, in other words, to interpret the universe in the terms of our own consciousness. Indeed, there is no other way in which the universe can be interpreted by man, and no other way in which whatever we may find at its source can be interpreted. Whatever we may find at the core of the universe it goes without saying that it will not be altogether distinct and different from what we ourselves are. Do you see where we are getting ? To nothing less than this, that if God be found at the core of the universe then God and man must be one in some vital and true sense. If the universe be but one means to the self-expression and self-realization of God, as may well be the case, then to the full extent of that one means man is the self-expression of God. Not one man here and there, however he may tower above the rest of his fellows, but man as man, mankind as a race of conscious beings.

We have seen that one of the simplest and most indisputable facts about things is that man is a part of the universe, that whatever more than man the universe may be it includes man and in such a manner that he is seen to be an integral part of its fabric. Do the facts of life tell us anything more about the universe ? I think they do. The very word we use to speak of the sum-totality of things reveals something vitally important about it. We call this sum-totality of things a universe.

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And the word could never have been framed by the human mind if there had not first existed a sense of unity and oneness manifest amid all the variety and multiplicity of life's manifold activity. It is not merely for want of a better term that we call this infinite concourse of things a universe. It is because we plainly see that there is a definite and uniting relation linking together land and air, sky and sea. "All are but parts of one stupendous whole." The laws of earth and air, of sea and land, and of the manifold intricacy of the human mind are not in conflict. There is, as every moment of our existence and every motion of our activity demonstrates, a definite unity and harmony of law. This is one of the simple things we know as a concrete fact and as surely as we know that fire burns.

Yet another thing, which the facts of life reveal, is the existence at the core of the universe's life of a mighty, mystic power which, to avoid the use of terms that may confuse our thought by their ordinary association, let us call a Life-Force. Throughout all its manifold activities the universe as it is known to the consciousness of man everywhere reveals not only initial impulse, but a continual urge. There is something back of all that we see and know that is forever pushing things on, and that is everywhere and all the time present. It is the inner essence of all evolving life and the vitality and stability of every law by which life is anywhere and everywhere sustained. It is

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present in every one of us, and, though we cannot tell for what it may be, it is using us as one medium of its activity. Sometimes it would almost seem, as George Bernard Shaw somewhere says, as if it were taking us by the scruffs of our little necks and compelling and coercing us in spite of ourselves to serve its tasks and purposes. It is this Life-Force in man that has made him what he is, and all that he is. Not only are we identified with this Life-Force in the most vital sense and altogether dependent upon it, but in a profoundly true sense WE ARE THE LIFE-FORCE OPERATING IN A CERTAIN DIRECTION.

Now the existence of this Life-Force is no theory. It is a simple fact of knowledge. If we cannot see it, at least we can see its effects, nor can we anyhow escape them. It is an absolute certainty, as Spencer put it, that man is ever in the presence of an infinite and eternal energy from which all things proceed. Science and philosophy would now seem agreed that the facts of the visible material world are but phenomenal of an invisible power behind them ; “ so that visible things are no longer hard and fast existences, but rather functions of an invisible energy.”

It is also a fact, I believe, that this invisible energy that we have so far spoken of in impersonal terms as the Life-Force is really the actuality of all that men have ever meant when they have breathed the name “ God.” This, I fancy, is



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what men have always meant and what they have tried to interpret to themselves in every idea of God that has taken shape within their minds. What we can know of this Life-Force in its actual nature, or whether we can know anything, I will leave it to the chapter following to discuss, with but one word here of suggestion. In the little lamp that hangs above my desk and that sends forth its beams as I write these words there is active and invisible energy that men have learned to call electricity. I do not know what it actually is in essence ; neither do you, I judge. It is at once perhaps the mightiest and most mysteriously elusive force which man has harnessed to his uses. But I do know as simple concrete facts at least two things about it that are each in a measure a revelation of its nature. It may have within its essence the possibility of a multitude of other activities and manifestations that neither you, nor I, nor any other has dreamed of, but I do know that it gives light and heat. Actual contact and experience with it tells me that it will light my room and cook my toast, and these two things I learn and know from my experience of its actual manifestation in two forms of its activity. It might also be added that I know with the same certainty and by the same means that electricity combines driving power with light and heat.

The suggestion is not without applicability to the Life-Force of the universe. Moreover, if



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God and the Life-Force may be in any true sense identified then the answer to the question of this chapter is that God and man are One in vital truth and fact.

“ Flower in the crannied wall,  
I pluck you out of the crannies,  
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand  
Little Flower—but if I could understand  
What you are, root and all, and all in all,  
I should know what God and man is.”

## CHAPTER III

### GOD AND DEMOCRACY—A MONARCHIC GOD, OR A DEMOCRATIC GOD ?

ONE of the conclusions of the preceding chapter is that there exists at the core of things a mystic, mighty power, which to avoid confusion we have designated a Life-Force. This Life-Force we have seen is clearly the inner essence of all evolving life and the vitality and stability of every law by which life is everywhere maintained. It is this Life-Force, moreover, that has made man what he is. Not only are we identified with it in a vital sense and altogether dependent upon it for the existence of our being, but in a profoundly true sense we are the Life-Force operating in a certain direction. The Life-Force may, and does, have other mediums of operation, but that it operates in man there can be no question.

There is perhaps no better way of focussing attention upon the essential point upon which the further development of the argument of these pages depends than by asking the simple question,—Is this universal Life-Force, the existence and

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activity of which is recognized by all science and abundantly confirmed by our actual personal experiences, God ? Is this mysterious energy, power, force which is sustaining the universe in all its activity and of which all the activities of the universe are a direct expression—is this God, or is it not ? Is this really what we mean by the word “ God ” ?

Common as the word “ God ” is in our speech there are multitudes of people who are quite unable to define what they really mean by the term and who show the most utter confusion and bewilderment when they are asked to make the attempt. I have sometimes tried the experiment of asking people the question, What is the actuality you have in mind when you utter the word “ God ” and how and in what other terms could you define it ? and the amount of vagueness and incoherence revealed has been amazing. And yet the word “ God,” like any other word of human speech, is merely a symbol for a certain mental conception. It is our attempt to describe something, a sign we put to represent something. What, then, is it that we mean to represent ? What is the actuality we have in mind when we use this word ? Is it the Life-Force of the universe ? If not, what is the actuality that we seek to represent to ourselves by the word ? Evidently we mean something actual and definite, and if this is so it ought not to be impossible to state it in

some other fashion. Either we are thinking of the universal Life-Force when we speak of God, or we are thinking of something else. But what else can we be thinking of? Is there anything beyond this universe that it is possible for the human mind to define, comprehend, or know?

Let us leave the question to simmer for a while, and let me pass on to remind you that thus far in human history the best religious thought has always sought its evidence for God in the facts of life as it was able at any given time to know and understand them. I turn up a book of theology, and almost any book of systematic theology would illustrate the same thing—I turn up a book of theology that is an accepted standard work in America and the work of the well-known American theologian, Dr. William Newton Clarke, and I find the following definite statement: “There are two general lines of evidence for the existence of God. One starts from the intellectual standpoint and moves along with the intellectual action of man; the other begins from the standpoint of religion and moves along with religious and spiritual experience. The intellectual movement leads in general to belief in the existence of a God, and the religious evidence taking up and crowning the intellectual completes the certainty of the existence of God.”\*

\* “An Outline of Christian Theology,” p. 105.

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I am concerned in this reference only to point out that here, as almost everywhere else in systematic theology, the primary evidence for the existence of God is from what Dr. Clarke calls "the intellectual starting point." And what is the alleged evidence from this standpoint ? "This evidence," says Dr. Clarke, to confine the quotation to one writer, "extends to the discovery of a mind in the universe. The discovery of a mind in the universe is made :

"First, Through the intelligibleness of the universe to us ; that is to say, since we can understand the universe there must be in the universe a mind similar to our own.

"Second, Through the idea of cause. If we wish to know the nature of the cause that originated and gave character to the universe, we must examine the universe as an effect, and judge what manner of cause would be adequate to it.

"Third, Through the presence of ends in the universe."

This last is really the familiar and hoary "teleological" argument as it is known to theologians, which, while it has been largely modified, as Dr. Clarke himself admits, by the Darwinian discovery that conditions develop necessities and necessities develop ends, is still much in evidence in current theological thinking.

Even Bishop Butler, perhaps the most vigorous foeman to cross swords with the English Deists of



the eighteenth century, in spite of his abhorrence for speculative religious thought, claimed to find in the facts of nature and life the confirmation for the existence of the God of his revealed religion. So, then, we see that in all sound theological thinking, the existence, if not the nature of God, is made a subject of reference to the facts of life. And, here is the point, in all such reference the argument of necessity is based upon the common understanding of the facts of life and the universe that prevails at the particular time. The older teleologists found evidence in nature that means are adapted to ends and consequently assumed that the ends must be the result of a foreordaining mind equal to the necessary adaptation of the means in each case. They thought of the universe as brought into being by a divine personality with a definite number of ends to be achieved in it from the beginning. They did not then see, as Darwin and others later came to see, that many of these ends are directly developed from the necessities arising from certain conditions in the progress of an evolutionary process. But they did the best they knew in the light of their own understanding of nature and life.

We are not, therefore, deviating from the established path when we refer the question of our knowledge of God to the facts of life as they are now known and understood, albeit they may be differently understood and otherwise interpreted

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than in past times ; we are simply following a method that theological thinking has rendered conventional. There can then be no impropriety in reviewing the thought of God in the light of the newer knowledge and wider understanding, nor in endeavouring to revitalize our conception of God by a fresh study of life's facts, since it is indisputable that our knowledge of life has materially advanced within recent times and our understanding of things in general undergone radical change.

This is what, in a very humble way, I am trying to do in this essay—find a thought of God that will not only fit the facts of life as we now understand them, and as older ideas do not ; but find a thought of God also that will mean something to us in practical life. For I cannot escape the feeling, in spite of all our churches and preaching, that the older thought of God now means very little to a great many people. For very many, indeed, it seems to be little more than an old superstition to which they run when in trouble, a little surreptitiously and with a half concealed fear of being found out by those whose good opinions they wish to conserve and who they think, rightly or wrongly, are sceptical of the whole business.

Let me call attention to yet another and a profoundly important thing before we come back to the questions we have left to simmer in our minds. To the fact, in a word, that thus far the

world's thought of God has been largely governed and fashioned by monarchic ideals and oligarchic conceptions. The words that we most naturally associated with our thoughts of God (is it not so ?) are for the most part such words as King, Lord, Divine Ruler, Law-giver, Judge, and the like. A reference to the Hymn-Book of almost any great religious denomination to-day would show the still constant recurrence of the thought suggested in such lines as, "Come, Thou Almighty King"; "Judge Eternal, throned in splendour"; "O worship the King, all glorious above"; "O Thou who art my King"; "Teach me, My God and King"; "Thou rulest Lord, the lights on high"; "Arm these Thy soldiers, Mighty Lord"—all of which lines, by the way, are taken from the Hymn-Book of one of the most liberal and progressive of modern denominations.

Now what is the thought which is expressed in such lines, and where did we get it? Is it not primarily the thought of God, to use the words of one of the lines, as an Almighty King? And where, pray, did we get this thought, if not from the kingly ideal in nations and the monarchic conception in government. It is human history with its thrones, kings, and rulers that has given this shape to our thought of God. I do not see how this can be disputed. Suppose human society had never known any other form of government than a republican democracy, do you think we

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should still have talked and thought and sung of God as King of Kings and Ruler of Rulers ? It cannot be. Such a shape and form could only have been fashioned in the atmosphere and under the influence of courts and thrones.

And what is the essence of the monarchic conception and the kingly ideal in ordinary life ? Is it not the idea of government by a person superior and external to the common life of the governed, as opposed to the idea of government from within by the people themselves ? It is not so very hard to see where we got our ideas of an external and transcendent deity when one analyses the matter a little carefully. It seems to me that the theory of the divine right of kings and the theory of an absolute, transcendent divine ruler of the universe are very closely related and that the one depend very largely upon the validity of the other. Challenge the theory of the divine right of kings and at one and the same time you challenge the whole fundamental monarchic conception whether applied to God or to man. Grant this, and what follows ? Let me make it as pointed as I can. It follows, then, that the American nation and constitution is history's most tremendous challenge to the thought of God as Almighty King. Democracy is the negation of monarchy as much in religion as in politics. When the crown falls and the throne crumbles in social government, then, indeed, it follows *Vox Populi, Vox Dei*. Demo-



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cracy takes the sceptre of kingliness out of the hand of the monarch and places it in the hand of the hewer of wood and the drawer of water in order to show that he, too, is of the same stuff of which kings are made. It takes government out of the hands of a governing class and makes government the prerogative and responsibility of the whole complex mass of a nation's citizenship.

It has been the accepted principle of all monarchical national life, as it is the essence of all aristocratic ideals and conceptions, that there are some who are born to rule and others who are born to be ruled—in other words, that kingship demands certain qualities that are never found in the mass, but only in exceptional individuals. It was against this theory and belief that both the American Declaration with its insistence that all men are created equal and with definite and inalienable sovereign rights, and the French Revolution with its great watchwords, Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, appealed. And the appeal of both was from common human history and the constitution of every sovereign state to the common heart of humanity.

The American Declaration of Independence was more than the indictment of a sovereign ruler by a group of hitherto dependent colonists—it was the affirmation of a new faith, the utterance of a new vision, the articulation of a new urge in humanity's heart. Whatever might have been the crimes of



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King George III. of England, and no matter into what extremes of revolt the colonists of America might have been driven by monarchical misrule and tyranny, such an enunciation of principles as are at the foundation of the Declaration of Independence would have been utterly impossible unless there had already emerged in the heart of its framers the consciousness of a new authority and the vision of a new destiny. From the majesty of monarchy they appealed to the majesty of democracy. The appeal was an appeal from doubt and fear to faith and hope. On a scale of daring magnitude and glorious magnificence the founders of the American Commonwealth affirmed their faith in man as man, in humanity as humanity. Over against the accepted doctrine of centuries that human society is passive material moulded to the will of the few, they set the startling challenge that human society is dynamic, self-acting, self-sustaining, and self-advancing, and that out of the mass struggle of human life new destinies and dignities may be safely trusted to evolve.

When a nation that has thus repudiated monarchy in government takes time to reflect, it will surely not be long before it sees the practical impossibility of retaining in theology what it has felt bound to reject in politics.

Now am I not right in saying that, so far, in spite of the rapid development of democratic conceptions and institutions there has been no

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real attempt, at least on the part of churches and preachers of religion in general, to face the facts and implications of the new world and its new governmental forces as they relate to the thought of God? The language and thought-forms of our church services and of the majority of the sermons that are being preached to-day are the language and thought-forms of a time when the only governmental conception was that of a king upon a throne, and when the office of kingship was the highest thing to which the thought of man had risen. But this, as we have hinted, is not the state of the world's thought to-day. The mind of man has leaped to a thought that has already gone far in revolutionizing the conduct of the world's politics and that is rapidly finding concrete shape in amazing new institutions.

It is impossible to find any point of harmony and reconciliation between the great forces that are to-day reshaping the world's life, and that have already laid the foundations of the American nation firmly upon what most of us believe to be an impregnable rock, and the thought expressed in the wish of a certain popular evangelist who a dozen times recently has said that he would like to be God for fifteen minutes, in order to accomplish something which only an arbitrary monarch with a strong tendency toward tyranny could possibly desire to carry out. And in spite of the crudities of this evangelist's theology, in which it may well

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be that many of his more cultured supporters do not follow him, it is pretty plain that his fundamental conception of God is that of the overwhelming majority of American church-goers. And that conception, as might easily be shown from the evangelist's own preaching and prayers, is in the main governed by the monarchic and oligarchic ideal. What you have at the heart of the universe in this view is not a democracy, nor anything in which democracy and democratic impulses can have a part, but an absolute monarchy. I do not write this unkindly, nor with any desire to indulge in harsh criticism, but simply to call attention to the plain facts.

Very little, if any, of the general preaching of our church pulpits to-day is in any way related to the democratic impulse and conception, or serves in any real way religiously to interpret democracy. God and democracy in popular preaching seem to have no more relation than as though neither existed. Now whatever we may think of it, and whether or not we are sympathetic to democratic outreach, at least it must be admitted that social democracy is the latest and most important development of civilization. What is more it can hardly be doubted that democracy has come to stay and is destined to assume an ever-widening place in the affairs of human society. For America democracy has already come ; for the rest of the world most thoughtful observers agree that it is

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the coming thing. But is this a fact that can have no bearing upon our philosophy and our religion? Is it a fact which religion in particular can afford to ignore? How can religion hope to live in a democratic age and state while still advancing its thought and preaching its message in the terms of a monarchial age and ideal? How can democracy, further, as a fact of life and a stage in the development of civilization ever be religiously interpreted in the outgrown terms of monarchial government? To ask these questions is surely sufficient to suggest the only answer that can be given. Religion can only flourish and remain a vital influence with men as it serves to interpret life as men know it, and as they know it now. Out of democracy as a social force, spirit and movement, there must surely come ere long a new philosophy of life that will be as different from the past forms of philosophy as the governmental forms of social democracy are different from those of the monarchial period.

Prof. H. A. Overstreet, of New York, in a brilliant article in the *Hibbert Journal* for January, 1913, has pointed out that in the past "human and animal and plant were conceived as fashioned from the outside, and sustained and guided by a power or powers not themselves. It is not difficult to infer the type of world-view that must inevitably issue from such social and scientific habits of thought. Naturally the world would be regarded as passive material, fashioned and guided



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by a power or powers not itself. It is not surprising then to find everywhere in ancient and Middle Age philosophy, both Eastern and Western, the dominant thought of an oligarchic government of the universe. On the other hand"—and here is the problem as it faces us to-day—"the spirit of modern thought is essentially democratic, dynamic. Human society is not in the main passive material, moulded to the will of the few. It is self-active, self-sustaining, self-advancing. Again, human, animal and plant are no longer regarded as fashioned from the outside, to remain fixed in their respective spheres. Through ceaseless activity they are fashioning themselves, creating, through their own mass struggle, new problems and new destinies. Is it difficult," asks Professor Overstreet, "to infer the type of philosophy that must issue from this democratic-developmental thought of the present ? Certainly we may say at once that it will have no sympathy with the typical 'ruler' and 'guide' views of the past. Ruling and guiding must be from within society, operative through the actions and reactions of each and every member."

Such a philosophy, fashioned in the spirit of democratic-biological ideals of the present day, Professor Overstreet affirms, will inevitably repudiate whatever of monarchic or oligarchic still lingers in the God-views of the present. And the problem of philosophy in this matter is



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also the problem of religion—a problem, if that be possible, even more vital for religion than for philosophy.

Close students for a long time now have recognized that one of the fundamental causes at the root of so-called present day religious indifference is the persistence in religious thought and teaching of dogmas and doctrines that are no longer capable of commanding the assent of thoughtful, intelligent people; and there has been in consequence an earnest attempt on the part of the more progressive clergy of most churches, and on the part of theologians in general, to revitalize these older doctrines of the creeds by reclothing them in new terms, more in harmony with modern thought-forms. But I believe the difficulty is more fundamental than this. It is not merely the doctrinal developments of theological thought that need attention, but the fundamental God-conceptions that are their foundation.

It is no longer a question of whether or not we can believe in the old idea of an everlasting hell, or a primeval fall, or a blood redemption on the cross, or a physical resurrection of the body of Jesus from the grave, or in the story of the Virgin Birth, but whether we can any longer hold fast to a conception of God in which are still retained the essential elements of an oligarchic and monarchic universal government. The most urgent and stupendous problem for modern theology and reli-

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gion centres in the one question—Can the thought of God be anyhow reshaped in terms of democratic outreach and in such a manner as to be harmonious therewith and to serve as an interpretation of democracy ? Is the conception of a democratic God anyhow possible ? And, if so, what sort of a God will it be that such a conception will give us ? This, I repeat, is the question of supreme interest and importance for religious thought to-day. Personally I believe that the doctrine of Divine Immanence, as it is popularly called, points the way to an answer ; though I am not by any means sure that this doctrine as now preached is itself the real answer. It represents a stage of development in the progress towards a new and more vital thought of God for our age, but its implications need to be more clearly recognized than they have yet been, and its application must be of a somewhat different, and certainly of a more definite, nature than anything yet attempted.

At the outset of this chapter we asked the question, Is the universal Life-Force, the existence of which is recognized by all science and abundantly confirmed by ordinary human experience, God ? Is this mysterious energy, power, force which is sustaining the universe in all its activities and of which all the activities of the universe are a direct expression—is this the actuality men have in mind when they speak of God, or is it something else that they are thinking of, and, if so, what ? To

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return to this question, the plain and simple answer I believe must be that this mysterious Life-Force *is* what men mean when they talk of God, though there are, of course, many who have never analysed their own use of words sufficiently to be sure of it. Certainly this is what the more progressive modern theology means by the word "God," and at least one prominent English preacher has plainly said, "When I say God, I mean the mysterious Power which is finding expression in the universe, and which is present in every tiniest atom of the wondrous whole."\*

No matter into what transcendent terms people may have translated their thought, this mysterious power, it would seem obvious, is what they have in mind. A God beyond and distinct from the universe is unthinkable, and even if thought could postulate His being, He would still be unknown and unknowable by mankind. There may be other *worlds* than our own wherein life manifests itself in a multitude of ways concerning which we are ignorant, but if this universe be a universe we can conceive nothing beyond it, and certainly we can know nothing beyond it. This is a point that can hardly need argument, for it must be plain that if God be the Infinite Cause whence all things proceed then we cannot get beyond that, nor is there any need to try. It would also appear

\* Rev. R. J. Campbell, "The New Theology," p. 18.

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plain that we can know nothing of this Infinite Cause from which all things proceed except as we read it in the universe and in our own souls as part of the universe. A transcendent God would be to the exact extent of His transcendence unknown and unknowable.

I must confess to a certain sense of bewilderment when I read learned theologians to the effect that "by the transcendence of God is meant not that He is outside of and views the universe from above and beyond, but that He is not shut up in it, not limited by it, not required in His totality to maintain and order it."\* "Not *shut up in* a universe?" "Not limited by" a universe? What can the words possibly mean? The universe is not a cage; it is our word for the whole of things. Not limited by a universe? What are the limitations of a universe? The universe is not simply our world, plus Jupiter, Mars, Venus, the Sun, the Moon, and the Milky Way, it is the sum totality of all conceivable existing things. Bigger than our knowledge of it, do you say? Why, of course. We have not begun to dream as yet what the universe means. "Not required in His totality to maintain and order it"? How do we know that? How can we know it? Is it suggested that in some of its aspects the being of God, the Life-Force of the

\* W. N. Clarke, "An Outline of Christian Theology," p. 180.



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universe, is finding modes of activity distinct from its operations in this universe? Very well, let it be granted and what then do we know or can we know of such modes of activity? What is the sphere beyond the universe where being finds its new fields of manifestation? The dictionary defines the word "universe" as meaning, in the full and complete sense, "the aggregate of all existing things; the whole creation embracing this and other worlds and everything comprised in space." Do we accept the definition? What, then, can we say to the suggestion that predicates that God, who is the Life-Force of the universe, is not required in His totality to maintain and order it? What do the words mean? Is it suggested that God, or some part of God not engaged in maintaining and ordering the universe, is existing and finding modes of activity where nothing exists? Surely God does not exist in parts, and where nothing exists, nothing exists. Surely this vain groping in the dark after an Absolute that is not the universe, and that is nobody knows what, is a foolish expenditure of strength while the great problems of the universe we are slowly learning to know in slight degree are all the time pressing in upon us.

To come then to the real point. Assuming that the Life-Force of the universe is what we mean when we speak of God, is it anyhow possible to reinterpret this infinite and mysterious power



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(which so far men have almost exclusively defined to themselves in the terms of monarchic ideas) in the terms of modern democratic outreach, in harmony with the spirit of democracy, and in such a way as will serve to interpret democracy to itself. What is the relation of God to this new world movement we call democracy, and what does democracy itself mean as an outgrowth of the mighty cosmic struggle ?

## CHAPTER IV

### THE NATURE OF THE LIFE-FORCE

WE have seen that the established precedent of theological thinking, in making the subject of God's existence a matter for reference to the facts of life, is a sufficient justification for reviewing our thought of God to-day in the light of the newer knowledge and wider understanding of modern times and endeavouring to revitalize our conception of God by a new study of the facts of life. And we have seen, also, that the most stupendous problem of modern theology centres in the question, Can the thought of God, as the great Life-Force of the universe, be anyhow reshaped in the terms of democratic outreach, or at least in such a way as to be harmonious therewith? It will be in line with the general character of the preceding argument if we now attempt to acquaint ourselves with one or two simple facts about democracy as they relate to our main problem.

Perhaps the simplest and most apparent fact about democracy as a phenomenon of modern

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life is that it is not something that has been foisted upon mankind and the world from without, but something rather that has grown up within human history as part of a general organic social evolution of which there is abundant evidence and proof. Democracy is not the invention of one man or of one nation. It is first and foremost a new spirit that has developed in the human social consciousness, and while it has perhaps come to its fullest expression in the American nation and Constitution, it is nevertheless a world-wide movement of the tendencies and development of which there is striking evidence in many lands. The statement that democracy represents the latest and fullest development of social consciousness and social organization will hardly be questioned by any one. Radically different as are the spirit and institutions of democracy from the social spirit and institutions that precede it they are none the less seen to be an outgrowth from the past. There is no way of explaining democracy other than by calling it a growth, a phase, a stage, a development—name it how you will—of a general evolution of organic social life.

To say, therefore, that the forces which have developed democracy must have been inherent in the Life-Force of the universe is but to repeat in other words the familiar axiom that the cause must be equal to the effect. Democracy is an effect of the cause, whatever it may be, that has

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produced mankind and every form of mankind's earlier social organization. It is not something that we can treat, or consider, apart from the general evolution of life, customs, institutions, and manners. In the most vital sense democracy stands related to all past progress and development. Indeed, there is a very true sense in which we may say that all the earlier stages of social development are but the stepping-stones which have made it possible for the modern world to reach democracy.

Definite as are the distinctions, which for the purpose of our thinking we seek to indicate when we speak of epochs of history, it is nevertheless plain that human history is not a mosaic of unrelated parts cemented together. There is a continuity and correlation about all the developments of human history that is only rightly designated and understood when we recognize that back of them all is a persistent upward tendency, forward struggle, and continuous evolution. There is a tremendous difference between the primitive savage and the modern English citizen, but just as surely there is a vital and undeniable link. Whether or not democracy could have been otherwise achieved it is idle and futile to speculate; for the plain facts are that this is how it has been achieved—by a persistent, unceasing struggle on the part of the spirit in man with forces and conditions

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which he has sought to subjugate in the interests of what he has gradually come to know and believe to be higher possibilities. It is the same kind of process that in primitive times carried primitive man from savagery to civilization in its simplest forms that in these later times has carried man from monarchical governmental conceptions to the institutions and spirit of democracy. In a word, democracy relates itself, or rather stands related, to the whole process of cosmic evolution.

The answer, therefore, to the question, What is the relation of God, conceived as the Life-Force of the universe, to this new world-movement we call democracy? is that it is identical with His general relation to the whole cosmic process and progression. There is nothing new about the nature of God's relationship to democracy. His relation to democracy is what His relation has always been to a progressing and progressive universe and to an evolving social consciousness. And this must of necessity be pronounced of the most vital and intimate nature. You can no more separate God, if He be the Life-Force of the universe, from democracy than you can separate Him from the ethical qualities and spiritual ideals that have come to birth in the human mind.

So then it becomes no less true to say that God is democracy than to say that God is love, since in the realm of social consciousness democracy represents a development no less definite and



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important than that which love represents in the realm of ethical qualities. The spirit of a broad and generous good-will, indeed, between man and man is in its way almost as new a thing, and just as imperfect an accomplishment, as a true social democracy. Neither can be truly understood or rightly interpreted except in the light of the history out of which they have grown. If it is the urge of God that has brought us to all that we know of good-will, it is also the urge of God that has brought man to all that he knows of democracy. If the universe is really moving in any definite direction at all, and if any part of its development be a factor in whatever future may be before it, then democracy must also be pronounced such a factor.

In the realm of purely political history we all recognize that it is upon democracy and upon how powerful an influence it can be made in human affairs that the destiny of the world largely depends. Five hundred years from now it will be plainly seen that the democratic spirit and ideal are at least as vital a factor in contemporary political history as were the exploits of Roman militarism in the ancient world. At least democracy will give such a definite tendency and character to things that the world's history will be entirely different from what it would otherwise have been. Whether democracy, as we know it and seek to realize it, endure or perish

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there can be no question but that it will be a part of the texture of the world's life for all time. Nor will it be questioned, I think, that from now on democracy is destined to play at least as important a part in the history of the future as the monarchic conception has played in the history of the past, and when I say this I mean as important a part in the religious and philosophical thought of man as in the institutions and forms of social and economic life.

To recognize democracy as an outgrowth of the cosmic struggle and as an essential factor in the life of the future is one step, and an important step at that, toward a religious and spiritual interpretation and understanding of democracy itself; for then it follows that any spiritual interpretation we may give to life and any religious interpretation we may attempt for the universe will be equally applicable to democracy.

We are now in a better position to come back to the question of a preceding chapter—What, if anything, do we know of the Life-Force of the universe in its actual nature, and how can we put into new religious terms anything that it may be possible to learn about it? Or, to put it in another way, We have seen that there is good evidence for assuming the existence back of all phenomena of a universal Life-Force which is the inner essence of all evolving life; we have seen that this universal Life-Force is presumably

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the actuality men have in mind when they speak of God ; and we have seen, further, that the terms (largely those of monarchical ideals and oligarchic conceptions) in which men have commonly defined this power to themselves leave much to be desired in this increasingly democratic age. We have seen, too, that a religious interpretation of life which confines itself to monarchic and oligarchic terms will be increasingly handicapped in the modern world, and must almost certainly fail when it attempts to interpret democracy, if it ever should, in such terms.

The position in which we find ourselves at this stage of our argument is therefore roughly this : We still have before us the reality, or actuality, of all that men have ever meant when they have breathed the name God, and this reality is, of course, what it has always been, but the older forms in which men have sought to interpret it to themselves are inadequate to meet our present needs. We are, therefore, forced into the position of attempting some sort of a reinterpretation of fundamental realities that will be more harmonious with our present understanding of life and its facts. The task that confronts us, in other words, is that of seeking a new religious interpretation of life in its latest manifestation and in its fundamental qualities.

It may be well to ask what we mean when we talk about a religious interpretation of life. And

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the question is one that may be answered in two or three different ways. We may, for contrast, define a scientific interpretation of life as the attempt to set forth the facts of life in ordered sequence ; to analyse these facts in relation to the general laws by which they are apparently controlled ; to show the general method of life's activity and progress. And over against this, as indicative of what is meant by a religious interpretation of life, we may set the natural desire and attempt of mankind to interpret and understand the meaning of all this in its bearing upon the individual and collective life of men.

A simpler and perhaps more satisfactory way of answering the question, however, is by considering very briefly what a religious interpretation of life has hitherto meant in the light of the history of religion itself. What is it that religion has always sought to do in every attempt it has made to interpret life ? I believe there is one great thing, back of all ecclesiastical dogmas, doctrines, rites, and customs, which is characteristic of religion in all its varied forms, and that is the attempt which religion has always made to show a relationship between the individual soul of man and the great Life-Force of the universe. The central point of every attempt at a religious interpretation of life has always been this great effort to associate man with the Life-Force of the universe in some vital and concrete manner.



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Different religions have sought to do this in different ways, but the attempt in one way or another has been fundamental to them all. God and man are related as creator and creature ; as monarch and subject ; as benefactor and beneficiary. Or the relationship has been affirmed in the terms of fatherhood and sonship, as by Jesus ; or in the terms of a mystical identity between the "Atma" (the spiritual self of the individual) and the Universal Self, as in Hindu religious philosophy ; and in various other ways.

Religion has never been concerned to talk about the Life-Force of the universe, no matter in what terms it has spoken, as an isolated fact ; it has been concerned to define its relations with, and meanings for, human life. When we speak of a religious interpretation of life, therefore, we mean an interpretation of life in which a definite attempt is made to show a relationship between the infinite cause and source whence all things proceed and the individual life of men, and if possible to show further that this relationship has vital and peculiar meanings for every man. Our interest in discussing this profound matter in this way at this time is not merely the importance of the abstract question whether there be a universal Life-Force—a God—or not, but granting such an existence to ask what its meaning is for our lives and what the nature of the relationship is in which it and we stand. If the



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relationship be not that of arbitrary creator and arbitrarily created creature, or that of sovereign monarch and subject vassal, what is it ?

The question forces us back upon one that has already been stated—What is the nature of the Life-Force of the universe, and how can we best define it for our thought to-day ? What do we know, what can we know, of the Life-Force of the universe, that mysterious power whence all things proceed ? And the answer in one sense, in the abstract ultimate sense, must be presumably nothing. We know nothing, absolutely nothing, as to the nature of the Life-Force before it began to manifest in the outreach of cosmic struggle. Is this universe the first great manifestation of the Life-Force, or the latest of a cumulative series of manifestations ? We do not know. We cannot know. In one sense, I repeat, we know nothing and can know nothing. In another sense we know much and may yet learn infinitely more.

Rule out all the impossibilities in human knowledge of the infinite, and (if this universe be a real universe and our thoughts, feelings, and experiences real thoughts, feelings and experiences) there remains much that we both know and may yet learn of the infinite source whence all things proceed. For this universe, if it be a real universe, and if our own lives have any substantial reality as we must assume they have, becomes then itself the expression of the power

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behind it and within it. Self-expression is an inevitability of life in action. You may conceive of latent life lying unrevealed and unexpressed, but you cannot conceive of active life concealing its quality. A man cannot live and not express himself, nor can he anyhow hide from sight the revelation of himself which his every action serves to make plain. I am revealing myself to you, my reader, in the very words you are now reading. A careful reader of these lines cannot fail to detect something at least of the quality of my mind and of the general habits and method of my thought. Although you may never have seen me, something of my sympathies in life, my knowledge of life, my conscious and unconscious purposes in life are laid bare in these pages for all who have eyes to see. Even in the simplest and most commonplace things of life this fact is confirmed. You can tell something of a man's quality and character by the clothes he wears, by the way he walks, by the manner of his bearing and the form of his address. Every act of life is self-revealing and self-expressive, and life reveals something of its quality in every activity.

Apply this to the universe, as I think it may legitimately be applied, and you have at once a key to the mystery of its Life-Force. It is at least all that the universe reveals it to be. The universe is the progressive revelation of its Life-Force. It is the Life-Force in activity—the Life-

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Force expressed and expressing. There is no mystery about this part of it at least. What the universe is, that the Life-Force is. You cannot have in the effect what is not in the cause, for the effect is the cause, opened out, unfolded, developed and expressed.

All that the universe now is, God is, if He be really its Life-Force. Do you remind me that this statement carries with it far-reaching implications? I know it does. Do you remind me of what some have called "the ruthless struggle of the ages," and of "Nature red in tooth and claw"? I do not forget these things and I have no wish to blink hard facts however disturbing they may seem, for it is only by a resolute facing of such facts that the truth can ever be come at. There are difficulties, and tremendous difficulties, no matter how we approach this problem, but I do not think they are any greater from the standpoint we are now advancing than from any other. We must allow no one class of facts to blind our eyes to the rest, and we must draw our conclusions, if conclusions we are to draw at all, from all the facts in all their bearings and relations.

I want to tell you that it is for me a less impressive fact that the long struggle of the unnumbered ages reveals active forces of destruction operating almost unceasingly and that it reveals evil and sorrow and pain, than that it reveals also and no less clearly—indeed, as more powerful and per-

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## *The Nature of the Life-Force*

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manent—active forces of construction and the mystery of goodness and the marvel of love. It is a less impressive fact for me that the struggle of the ages has been fierce and long than that out of it there have evolved a mind and will in man that are able to mark its stages and that are capable at least of giving it some point and purpose. It is for me a less impressive fact that destructive forces exist than that out of the elemental forces of destruction there have been gradually fashioned the marvellous might of great constructive agencies. You may tell me the tiger has not yet been tamed, and in a measure it is true ; but at least the jungle has been cleared ; and in the habitation of dragons, whose gaunt and giant frames our imagination clothes with their fierce and fearsome forms—in these habitations of dragons, behold, an highway is there and a path for the foot of man.

It has been no child's play, and no cheap and easy theatricalism of the dramatist, this mighty struggle of the ages ; this tremendous uprising and outreach of the Life-Force that has brought us where we now stand and that has produced out of the womb of time you and me and the multitude of our fellow men and women. It has meant an anguish, an effort, a labour that no words can suggest, the vaguest notion of the intensity of which we are but now beginning to sense. Old-fashioned religionists used to speak to us of what it cost to win redemption for men on the cross,



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and they found language too limited to express their sense of the enormity of the price. How, then, shall we find words to express what it has cost to win life and consciousness for man, not to speak of what it has cost to make possible the democracy of which we have spoken ? Manhood, humanity, brain, intelligence, consciousness—how little we realize what it has cost in the great struggle of the ages to bring these to being in a race ! We talk sometimes of romance, but do you know that the most fearsome, fascinating and thrilling romance that can ever be penned is the story of the development, the achievement, of human life upon this planet ?

Go into any great museum in the land, where are gathered together the relics of the ancient and now forgotten forms of the earlier life of the world—take your stand before the giant skeletons of mammoth, mastodon and megatherium, tinoceras and dinosaur, of dinotherium, ichthyosaurus and iguanodon—the creatures of prodigious length, height and strength that were once the denizens of the earth we now inhabit and that once strove for mastery, and in the presence of these mighty relics try to remind yourself of what it must have meant for life to find its way from their estate to that of modern manhood, the manhood of a race yet in the making.

Forces of evil and destruction ! indeed they have existed and still exist, but what are these com-



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pared with the mighty forces of construction and conservation that from out of primal protoplasm and simple cell, and from out the barbaric forms of life's developing process, have evolved the amazing miracle and the mysterious subtle intricacy of the mechanism of a human mind? What words or figure, what daring imagination of the mind, can ever depict the unspeakable intensity of the struggle by means of which life has won its achievements even in this little world of ours?

And in all this struggle, and most of all in what has thus far come out of it, is the Life-Force of the universe revealed. Here to-day in every one of us, in these faces, these hands, these physical bodies of ours; in the homes in which we dwell; in the streets we traverse; in the civic government which orders them; in the state and nation in which we are found; in the books upon our shelves; in the pictures upon our walls; in the art of the poet and in the rhythm of music; in the genius of the inventor; in the skill of the surgeon; in the craft of the toiler; in the moral laws to which we yield obedience; in the tender affections that move us and bind us together—in all of these is seen the achievement of the struggle and the expression of the power that has sustained it.

Whatever else the Life-Force of the universe may be that we do not know and have never dreamed, at least it is the highest it has achieved

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in us individually, in mankind collectively, and in the world at large and in general. And just as we do not judge and ought not to judge the tree by the imperfect sapling, nor the corn in the ear by the first springing of the blade, so we ought not to judge the Life-Force that has produced us by anything less than its highest manifestations in ourselves and in the world, by anything less than its highest achievements of its tremendous struggle. I find it impossible to define the Life-Force in terms of the ferocity of the tiger when the constant spectacle of mother-love is ever before me, for the simple reason that of the two things I am compelled to pronounce the latter the higher. Both the tiger and its ferocity are realities, but in the light of history they appear as passing realities and progressive stages in an evolving life. I do not deny them any more than I deny my own childhood, but I see in manhood that which transcends them.

The universe, as we now know it, is not a mere fortuitous concourse of atoms—out of it have developed and in it are contained all the spiritual impulses, instincts and possibilities of every human soul. As the self-expression of its Life-Force the universe stands as the revelation not merely of prodigious energy and mighty unfathomable power, but as the revelation also of love and all its mystic kith and kin. I am not trying to bring our argument round by a long circle to a familiar and conventional point. I am simply trying to

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call attention to facts that cannot be ignored in any attempt that is made to face the question : What do we know of the nature and quality of the Life-Force of the universe ? At least we know that it is all that is expressed in the highest manifestations and achievements of the life that now is. Whether or not it was all this before the universe took its present shape there can be no question that it is *now* all this.

There is one other thing, at least, that we know of the Life-Force of the universe that I may hint at in bringing this chapter to a close. We know that all the victories of the Life-Force of the universe that are now apparent—all these mighty achievements that we have so briefly suggested—have been won and won alone by means of this mighty struggle of the ages. They have not come about merely by chance, they have not just happened. They are the actual fruit and result of strife, turmoil and travail. The struggles of an uprising and onward pressing life to-day are but typical and reminiscent of a struggle that has been from the beginning. Could it have been otherwise ? Could the brain, mind and heart of man have been otherwise achieved—anyhow else possible ? Neither you, nor I, nor any other, can answer. .

What, then, can we do, what else is there left to do, but to seek to interpret this mysterious power whence all things proceed in the terms both

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of what it has accomplished and the highest it has accomplished, and in the terms of the struggle by which that highest has been attained? A God in an easy chair, or upon a monarch's throne; a God in a distant heaven and with a court and retinue of angels; a God working by the easy method of direct fiat and command; a God seeking only from men the idle flattery of lip homage and temple worship and moved and swayed in action by the selfish prayers of men; a God incarnate in but one human form and dying but one death for the emancipation of a race—no matter what foundation these ideas may find in ancient fancy and early superstition—will not fit, and cannot anyhow be made to fit, in the presence of this unspeakable cosmic struggle by which alone the thought of a larger life has been won.

If there is a God who needs the help and love of men, as I believe there is, then He is not a God who needs man's love and praise as the complement of angelic adoration—He is a God who needs man's help to win His victories and to carry the cosmic effort itself to yet more glorious achievements. If we are ever to find our way to a working faith in God that will fit the facts of the mighty cosmic struggle and that will fit no less the urgent needs of the world's present outreach and endeavour, it seems to me it can only be as we surrender absolutely and without reserve all this tissue of imaginations which picture God as a monarch



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## *The Nature of the Life-Force*

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upon a throne to be pleased and placated and His favour bought or won either by our own act or another's ; this thought of God as a being who can be angry with a man's anger extended to infinity, jealous with a very human sort of jealousy, and who asks no more of us than a blind allegiance and an unfaltering obedience to a monarch's whims and fiats.

It may even be that we shall find it necessary to surrender with these things the thought that adds to these essentially monarchial notions the touch of a humanistic paternalism which makes God translatable into the terms of an indulgent parent, too gracious and benign to be unkind and too indulgent to exact of us a task or penalty that calls for sweat of blood or anguish of soul, and all the time Himself remote from the blood-stained struggle of life.

The only God-thought, I believe, that can fit our needs and the facts of our knowledge of the great cosmic struggle is the thought of a God dying a thousand deaths daily and pouring out His life's blood unceasingly in continuous struggle—the God, in a word, of a mighty eternal urge and effort and of the struggle itself, with Whom our highest relationships and communion, if to such we are to attain at all, must be those of comrades and fellow-workers in the building of a universe and in the translation into ethical values of physical forces.



## CHAPTER V

### THE GOD OF THE STRUGGLE

OUT of the discussion of the preceding chapters what is the conception of God that most naturally emerges? We have seen that our universe is the product of a continuous and intensely terrific struggle and that all that we now view as its highest developments have been won at unspeakable cost. Can we dissociate the Life-Force of the universe from the struggle of the universe? Can we think that all this tremendous effort and fearsome struggle have been merely accidental and that such a universe as we now inhabit and of which we form part could just as easily have come into being without it? Can we suppose that it has all meant nothing to God, and that it means nothing to Him yet that the struggle should still proceed?

If so, if we cannot relate the struggle of the universe with God and God with the struggle of the universe, how then can we anyhow think of God as the God of the universe? If it has all meant nothing to God, and if from the beginning

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He has stood aloof and remote from it all, what comfort, strength, or inspiration can we possibly find in a thought of His existence, and *what is* His existence? If possessing the power to have otherwise created men and things—to have created them without all this travail and anguish—He has watched from afar a whole creation groaning and travailing in pain together until now, what surety can we possibly have that His feelings toward us have in them anything of kindness, friendliness, or benevolence?

To talk as some have sometimes done of God's kindness and benevolence as manifest in supposed isolated instances of intervention and deliverance is to reduce reason to an absurdity and intelligence to a farce. A great ship goes to the bottom in an angry sea and of the multitude of passengers a few are saved; an epidemic sweeps a city or a country and out of the wreckage and waste of life a comparatively few are delivered; a war devastates a continent and of the multitudes fighting in trenches a minority—or even a majority, what does it matter?—miss the shot-riddled and shell-shattered fate of their comrades. And they tell us that the goodness, benevolence and friendliness of God is manifest in the miracle of them that are saved. Pshaw! Can we believe it?

By what standard are the few who are saved to manifest the mercy of God chosen to the exclusion of the many who are lost? And if God can and

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does save the few, how is it that He cannot save the many or avert the calamity altogether ? There are those who tell us that it is a mystery and that it is in the heart of such mysteries that the roots of religion are grounded. Let us not think it, for the sake of all that we hold sacred in life. It is a lie—the cruellest sort of scepticism and the most vicious sort of immorality that can be uttered. A God who keeps my child alive to demonstrate His mercy, while He allows my neighbour's child to perish when, had He chosen, He could just as easily have kept both alive—oh ! the horror, the blank, unspeakable horror, the vicious immorality of it ! To think that we should postulate such a thought of a God we call good. Charge such a crime to man and the whole world would ring with the execration of humanity.

What would you or I say to a man who saw a house burning, rushed in, found two children stifling on the floor, and to demonstrate his mercy and love for childhood and with equal ability to have carried both to safety, lifted in his arms but one of the two, leaving the flames to scorch and sear and burn the tender flesh of the other ? Do you tell me that we can sustain faith by calling it a mystery to think that God demonstrates His love and friendliness for mankind by a course of action that is not greatly dissimilar from this ? Do you tell me that with unlimited powers for creating a

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universe and bringing manhood to being, and with no necessity for choosing the way of struggle and travail, God yet did choose the fearsome means and sanctioned a nature red in tooth and claw and a struggle the unutterable anguish of which no human mind can fully conceive? Do you tell me, moreover, that this is a struggle in which God Himself has no real part and one that in no way affects the peerless perfection of His being, a perfection which standing over against the horrible imperfection of life and man's estate does but shine with the more effulgent glory? No wonder men have turned in contempt from religion, accepting calmly the derisive taunt of "sceptic and infidel," when they have been faced with the choice of believing this or believing nothing.

I do not see how it is anyhow possible for people who face facts and think for themselves any longer to believe in a God at all, in the light of all that we now know of cosmic struggle, unless it be frankly recognized that in the most real and vital sense the struggle is related to inevitable necessities in the divine being. To say that it all might have been done just as easily some other way and that if He had chosen, God could have made the world perfect at the start and the reason why He didn't is a mystery bound up with problems of human freedom which we cannot fathom, will not avail. Nor will it avail to say that God did make things perfect and then allowed some outside evil to

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somehow creep in and turn everything topsy-turvy again for some reason which must remain an impenetrable mystery. You may build superstitions out of mysteries of this sort, but you cannot build faith, at least, not the sort of faith that can give men courage, strength, and nobility in life, for such faith can only come from a strong confidence in the rationality of things and in the moral integrity of life, both of which are alike belied in the foregoing assumptions.

How can we logically call God "Father" and worship Him as love and goodness, if we assume that all this struggle and effort of the ages—the dark ages struggling toward the light—and all that has been involved of pain, anguish, and suffering, has been sanctioned and permitted when there was no real necessity and when things could just as easily have been done in some way that would have avoided it all ?

But why should we bother ourselves with the difficulties of an earlier time and a crude philosophy when all the facts of life are before us and stand revealed in a clearer light than ever before ? If God be the Life-Force of the universe then how can we separate Him from its struggle, or regard the struggle in any other light than as inevitable and necessary—necessary to God Himself ? The struggle of the universe is the struggle of its Life-Force. It is not a mere permitted something, a something that might have been other than it is—



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all the anguish, pain, and effort of the struggle is God's own anguish, pain, and effort—if He be the Life-Force of the universe.

Why should we not take these facts of life and of the great cosmic struggle as they stand to-day and try to see what it is they have to teach about the nature and character of the Life-Force that is working in and through them, and which we have seen is presumably the great reality men have in mind when they speak of God? Why not let these facts speak? Do the facts of life—the facts of the great cosmic struggle as they are being ever more clearly revealed—suggest that the Life-Force of the universe is an absentee over-lord, or a remote power? Do they suggest anything that really harmonizes with the older thought of God as an almighty wonder-worker and a miraculous inter-vener?

Suppose we had only the facts of this mighty struggle to go upon. Suppose we had never heard a word about the old God-views of theology. Do you think we should ever have depicted God to ourselves, or whatever we might have named the mysterious power at the source of things, in the terms of an almighty ruler governing the universe in true monarchic fashion from a throne in a distant heaven? Should we not rather have sought to construe the God of this mighty struggle to ourselves in the terms of its mighty toil and effort?

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It seems to me that heretofore in our thoughts of God and our attempts to define Him, while we have done justice perhaps to one necessity of our minds, even to the necessity for presupposing a cause adequate to the effect of the things we see, we have failed almost completely to do justice to our newer knowledge of *how* things were done. In the major part of our theology, not excluding a great deal of theology that makes a loud boast of its modernity, we are still living in the thought-world of the time when it was believed that the world literally was created by divine fiat in six days and nights, and we have hardly as yet begun to adjust our theology in its deeper implications and fundamental conceptions to the discoveries of the newer knowledge and its revelation of a divine evolution as the process of creation.

We are still seeking communion and fellowship with a distant creator who orders and governs things from without and we are still praying, "Send *down* Thy light and Thy truth," as though the light and truth of God must of necessity come from above and without, and not from within. We are still praying to God to look down upon us and to be safely guided through this mortal life to a world or sphere above, where it seems to be assumed we shall be more in the immediate presence of God than we now are. The prayers we thus allow ourselves, in so far as they reveal anything of our innermost conceptions, show how

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far we still are from any really intelligent and consistent apprehension of a God working in and through the universe, its laws and forces.

The God to whom we commonly offer our prayers and praises in our churches is still a God upon a distant throne in a far-off heaven and not a God unspeakably near and continually present in the midst of the press of life. Our praises in this matter are just as much an evidence of the thought that still dominates our minds as are our prayers. If it is a throne of grace that we believe ourselves to be supplicating in our prayers, it is to a God upon a distant throne no less that we offer the homage of our praise. We sing of our song *rising* early in the morning; of *raising* to God our grateful hymns of praise; of bowing before the throne as saints in heaven adore; of crowding God's gates with thankful songs till earth with her ten thousand tongues shall fill His *courts* with sounding praise. In all of this there can be no real question as to the dominating underlying conception. I am not trying to pass harsh criticism, and I know how hard it is to find words and figures in which to truly express all that we feel about the infinite source of life. I am simply quoting from the common language of our liturgies and hymnology to show how much of the thought of a distant deity still remains. For it is not merely a matter of words, as an analysis of the content of our hymns of praise

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plainly shows. No one can deny that our hymns of worship are for the most part made up of expressions of thanksgiving for what we choose to think are the special favours of a gracious and perhaps indulgent God.

It is right, I believe, that we should express and cultivate the grateful spirit, and perhaps it is of secondary importance into what terms our gratitude is put if it be but the outburst of a truly thankful spirit. And yet I fancy it would sound strange to most of us, in the light of the forms our praise has commonly taken, if next Sunday morning in church our preacher instead of praising God for peculiar favours tried to voice a sense of gratitude that the mighty struggles of the universe had won such glorious achievements. If instead of praying, "Send down Thy light and Thy truth," he prayed, "Let the light within shine forth in yet more glorious splendour and let the truth within well up in yet more mighty strength." It is surely no exaggeration to say that it is the exception, the altogether unusual exception, to hear in our churches a prayer that is directly addressed to the God within.

And if this is true of our prayers in the stately dignity of their ecclesiastical and liturgical forms, how much more is it true of the cruder prayers of men as we sometimes hear them ! Over and over again I have heard prayers from the lips of perfectly sincere men that have seemed to take it



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for granted that the suppliant was in a position to impart to God a knowledge of some urgent need of which God would not otherwise be conscious and that have had for their plain end a desire to move God to some special action directed toward the salvation of immortal souls or some other important result that is apparently believed to depend almost entirely upon the importunity of the suppliant. I have no wish to caricature and I have a profound respect for the moral sincerity of many who thus pray, but you know well enough the sort of thing I have in mind. Prayers offered in great gatherings beseeching God to be merciful to the scattered heathen millions that dwell in darkness; prayers offered for an outpouring of the Holy Ghost, which outpouring it is often actually said can come alone in answer to earnest believing prayer; prayers fervently uttered for immunity from special and personal ills and dangers and for common temporal and spiritual blessings, and all so worded as to leave no doubt that the praying soul expects by means of such prayers to gain something that God would not otherwise give. The very earnestness and sincerity of such prayers is in most cases but the more convincing evidence of the fact that the dominant underlying conception is that of a God without and not within—a God external to the world's life and not immanent within it.



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And in the common expressions of our allegiance to God the same thing is evident, ay, evident in the very fact that we fall so naturally into the use of the word "allegiance" to describe it, for the word is one primarily applicable to the fidelity of a subject to his sovereign. In all of these directions, I repeat, it is the altogether exceptional thing to come across any vital recognition of the necessity for co-operation with a working God—a God to whom life's mighty struggle and strife are an imperative necessity. The task of finding new terms in which to express a newer and more vital conception of God and new terms in which to pray and praise cannot be an easy one, and yet difficult as it may be, it is a task we dare not shirk if future generations are to be stimulated and helped.

Now if the struggle of the universe be accepted as inevitable and as of sheer necessity related to God in some vital way so that God cannot be conceived apart from it, or regarded as standing in any sense aloof from it, what is the conception of God that most naturally arises? What have the facts of life and of this mighty cosmic struggle of which we have spoken to teach us about the nature of the Life-Force that works in and through them? The question so put is almost its own answer. How else can we then think of God than as the God of a mighty struggle and of a constant effort and persistent outreach? If the

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struggle of the universe has not been permitted by God but is rather an inevitable struggle then it must mean something to God and God must be winning something by means of it that would not otherwise have been possible. If God is really the God of our universe, if, that is, He is a reality at all and not merely a doctrine of ecclesiasticism or an imagination of the pious mind ; if He stands in any close and vital relation whatsoever with the world of men and things, why, then, He must be the God of the struggle.

And in this case it must certainly be more helpful and rational to define God in the terms of the mighty life-struggle than to perpetuate definitions, however long accepted, which involve all that is most characteristic and essential in monarchic governmental conceptions, and which logically applied cannot fail to create a sense of distinction and aloofness as between God and the life-struggle. There is a very radical difference between a ruler and a toiler, and if our knowledge of the life-struggle to-day be at all approximately true it is evident that it is as a toiler rather than a ruler that we must think of God. And if the word "toiler" as applied to God suggests anything that seems incongruous to our thought it is probably because we have never yet learned to estimate the true nobility of toil and to appreciate all that its grime and sweat and effort really mean in the furtherance and maintenance of life. Grant

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that it is still but a figure and not without its anthropomorphic limitations, it is nevertheless truer in the conception which it conjures up than figures suggesting external governmental control can ever be nowadays.

I put it to you that there is nothing in our present knowledge of life and the process by which its achievements have been won that really suggests external rule, oligarchic government, or arbitrary fiat; while there is a great deal that does suggest in unmistakable fashion the thought of effort and outreach from within. The universe is not a created mechanism, it is a mighty growth, the expression of prodigious effort, the product of unceasing outreach. The laws which are to-day recognized as the governing and controlling forces of life are not the laws of external authority and arbitrary fiat, they are the laws of growth and of the necessities of struggle and outreach.

The law in obedience to which the seed corn develops into the full corn in the ear, or which conditions our own development from childhood to manhood, is not the law of any external command. Nobody says to the seed corn "Grow!" and it groweth, in at all the same sense that an officer says to his soldier "Come!" and he cometh. The law by which the seed corn develops is the inward law of growth. It is in obedience to an inward life-impulse, and not in obedience to an

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external fiat, that it springs up from the ground and shoots forth its stalk, and this law which it obeys is one which it can neither resist nor refuse. It is the impulse of life, the urge and outreach of life, which governs its growth. And the same is true of the development of the universe in all its main phases. The movement which is exemplified is the movement of a life-force struggling to find expression, and this is the kind of impulse which is the inspiration of every truly creative quality of life.

The true artist does not paint to order, he works by inspiration. The true poet does not obey external commands, he obeys inherent impulses of his being. It is probable that very few great painters or poets could give any rational reason why they painted any great masterpiece in a particular way, or produced any great poem in a particular form. Something within surged up and sought an outlet, an expression, and in the strength of the impulse the thing was done. And this creative impulse which the artist obeys and which the poet seeks to express is in fact the first characteristic of life in its innermost essence as we can readily see from the more intimate experiences of our individual lives as they are everywhere revealed.

Very few parents, I imagine, in spite of all that has been argued in the name of Eugenics, deliberately sit down and plan the pro-creation

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of their children; a man and woman obey a primal urge of life, or of nature, as we more commonly say; it is done spontaneously and with little if any approach at deliberate contrivance, done instinctively, in much the same spirit as a hungry man snatches at bread. At no point does the force of external authority enter into the matter and at no point is there usually any other consciousness than that of impulsive obedience to inward prompting.

Why, then, should we hesitate to define the mysterious power whence all things proceed in the actual terms which the process of things itself suggests? Surely with all the outreach and urge of life in all its varied phases to guide us it is more reasonable to think of God as the God of the struggle, the eternal toiler in the universe, than as the monarch of an external governmental control of which the universe furnishes no evidence. It is in the distinction between these two different fundamental ideas, I believe, that we see the real contrast that is destined more and more to reveal itself in the religious thought of the world, and in the character, too, of the appeal which religion will voice. A monarch upon a throne commanding and demanding obedience necessarily means subjection, homage, servility, and a constant effort to please and placate as the fundamental emphasis of a religion which so interprets God, as religion, in



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the Western world at any rate, has thus far almost exclusively defined Him. While a toiler at a task exerting effort, striving for achievement, means a great impulse to co-operate and a corresponding challenge to struggle as the fundamental emphasis of a religion which seeks to interpret God in the terms of the struggle of life in the universe.

A prominent preacher of the younger generation—Dr. W. E. Orchard, of the King's Weigh House Church, London—has lately said, in a sermon published by the *Christian Commonwealth*, that “the Church has whittled down the appeal of religion until it has become so easy as to be of small avail. Religion, it has been said—and this has been put forward as a strong, if not its chief, recommendation—will bring great happiness, while to this has been added encouraging stories intended to show that religion is an almost certain road to prosperity. Meanwhile the fighting instincts of men have been left to run to seed in the bloody extravagances of militarism and race warfare.” The truth of this as a general statement will hardly be questioned by those familiar with conventional pulpit appeals, indeed, the case might be more strongly stated, for even common honesty, as we know, has often been commended to men on the low ground that it is the best policy, that is, that it pays the best returns in the long run.

I believe the time has already come for us to

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recognize that this "fighting" instinct in man, this capacity for struggle, heroism and courage born in him by the mighty struggles of the past is a vital and necessary element in our human make-up and that the universe still needs it. It is for religion to issue the challenge by which this sublime quality shall be directed away from the crude forms and barbaric methods to which it is now so largely confined to a new kind of warfare and a new form of struggle that will definitely and consciously relate itself to the struggle of the ages and serve to carry it to yet more glorious heights of achievement.

Says Dr. Orchard, in the sermon already quoted, "There is a whole armoury of spiritual weapons we do not so much as know how to use ; there is a whole category of risks we ought to be prepared to run ; there is a prayer which sheds bloody sweat ; there is a way of life which knows no relaxation, and a kind of heroism which surpasses anything the battle-field can show." And the thing is true, and it is upon these things that we must fasten attention, and to these things that the new appeal of religion must be addressed.

This great longing in man for adventure, this tremendous instinct for fighting, the glamour of sacrifice when inspired by a worthy cause and this mighty marvel of human courage, religion, new-born, must capture for the new tasks that await us. Even such tasks as religion will itself

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## *The God of the Struggle*

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unfold to men ever more clearly as the conception of the God of the struggle, the Toiler of eternity—a God needing the utmost we can give—more and more takes the place of the older conceptions of a God upon a monarch's throne.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE NEED FOR A NEW RELIGIOUS APPEAL

IN the religious world at the present time we are face to face with a fact which is recognized by all thoughtful people as constituting a very grave problem ; the fact, I mean, that for some reason organized religion has largely lost its power of appeal. The evidence for this fact consists not merely in what is sometimes called the " arrested development " of the churches and in the very obvious decrease of churchgoing as a social custom, but in the still more ominous fact that the message of conventional appeal is found to be lacking in genuine appeal. Nowhere, not even in the churches, do men's hearts thrill with enthusiasm and burn with passion as the appeal of religion is sounded forth. Religious observances are all too largely a matter of cold formality and lingering custom, and those who do still attend church services seem to judge religious utterances mainly by the elegance of their literary phrasing, or the eloquence of their oratory.

A fastidious congregation pronounces a sermon

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good if its phrasing has been careful and choice and if there has been nothing in it to offend the susceptibilities or sting the consciences of those who have listened. A less fastidious congregation will pronounce a sermon good if the preacher has shown well-controlled feeling and indulged in a pleasing performance of oratory. Even the sensational preacher, it is to be feared, is judged rather by his methods than by his material and message, and far more attention is usually paid to the novelty of his tricks and the audacity with which he flouts convention than to any real meaning his words may be intended to convey. The necessity (if it be a necessity) for the introduction of religious vaudeville into Christian pulpits and church activities is surely an indication of a loss of power in more dignified and traditional methods.

Everywhere we have examples of these things, and hardly anywhere evidence of any deep and genuine appeal on the part of religion. Everywhere we see men and women untouched altogether by religion in its conventional forms, or merely tickled and pleased by some clever pulpit performance, and hardly anywhere men and women really touched, stirred, and quickened in the depths of their being by the message and appeal of religion. So pertinent are these facts that it is strange the question has not already been asked whether there is not something in the nature of



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the message of conventional religion itself, something in the character or the point of its appeal, that may account for this absence of power and lack of force, for surely it cannot always have been thus, else religion could never have won its victories in the world.

To me it would seem abundantly plain that the failure of the appeal of conventional religion really to reach the heart of the modern world must be sought in the nature of its message and in the content of its appeal. Indeed, the defect lies plainly there. We have already seen that very little, if any, of the general preaching of the day is in any way related to the democratic impulse and conception, or serves to interpret democracy in a religious way. We have seen, too, that very little modern preaching is linked up with the mighty life-struggle of the universe, or serves in any real way to interpret this struggle to human consciousness. If we analyse the message of conventional religious appeals it is not hard to find further reasons for its failure. It falls short not only in what it fails to articulate, but in what it strives to emphasize. The things it takes for granted the world no longer takes for granted. Men not only refuse to be frightened by its threats, they refuse also to accept its ethics.

The three great keywords of evangelical Christianity (which is the only form of religion

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about which a great number of people know anything, and which is the main foundation upon which orthodox Protestantism seeks to build) are Sin, Salvation, and Judgment to come. And by sin is usually meant the personal offence of the individual man against God—offence of a character which necessitates the justice of God taking action, since (so it is said) even divine love cannot pass sin over unpunished. And by salvation is usually meant the work of a sinless saviour on behalf of sinful men; to wit, the redemption worked out by Jesus on the Cross. A man is saved, so we are told, only as he lays hold for himself upon the finished work of the redeemer and trusts himself by an act of faith to what the Cross-Bearer has done. And by judgment to come is usually meant a certain literal or figurative fiery retribution that it is claimed will visit the sins of men upon their heads after death, if for any reason they die without making the prescribed profession of belief—an everlasting punishment with or without fire and brimstone, from which it must be the supreme concern of man to save himself before he dies and from which it is generally held there is no salvation after death. Individual sin, meriting individual punishment and retribution, can naturally be met only by individual salvation. I do not wish to be unfair, but with these ideas at the foundation of a mes-

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sage it is hard to see how its appeal can possibly be addressed to anything other than the individual instinct in man.

If a man is told that it must be his supreme concern in life to save his own soul from a threatening doom beyond the grave, it stands to reason that he is not left with much time to think of others, nor is he likely to be inspired with any very exalted opinions of the importance of the present world and the part he is called to play in it. If it be a question of dodging hell, whatever hell may be believed to be, and if a man can only escape personally, then it is only to be expected that his attention will be directed to securing his own future safety, so long at least as the danger of hell is conceived as a real peril by his mind.

Now the simple fact is there is very little relation between this general view of life and of the future and the broader tendencies of the world's present thought. In a world of democratic thought and collective social action this purely individualistic point of view is out of place and is seen as a hindrance rather than a help to the great mass-struggle by which the victories of humanity are actually being won. The fact that it is so distinctly an individualistic appeal is in itself a serious drawback to the message of conventional religion. People who have caught the larger social spirit of the age no longer think

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in these terms, or see things from this view-point. And to the organized working-classes of the world, slowly awakening to "class-consciousness" and to greater efforts after economic freedom, this individualism of the older religious appeal is anathema. But there are more serious defects even than this. If the foregoing analysis of its nature be at all true then it is plain that the conventional appeal of religion is in reality an appeal to a man's own self-interest and to what are actually selfish impulses. Pushed to its logical conclusion it comes to this, and, indeed, is sometimes stated in these very terms: "Never mind what others are doing, save your own soul while yet there is time."

Not a very high ethic that, we should think, in a railway collision, or in a colliery or shipping disaster, and yet a good enough ethic for conventional religion in the disaster in which it claims this world is involved. Here, I believe, we get down to the real reason why the appeal of religion, in its conventional evangelical forms, at least, does not reach the heart of our modern world. The real reason is that the ethic of its appeal is not high enough, and its challenge in consequence lacks the virile moral quality that can alone stir the pulses of men. Its ethic, in fact, is one which in their ordinary lives men have come to hold in contempt. Men may not always live up to higher standards, but in their

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hearts they know that the selfish standard that prompts a man to consider only his own interest is beneath them and unworthy of them.

There is a higher instinct in man than the instinct of self-interest and in the modern world men are learning to know it. It is not because they are irreligious or indifferent to high and noble things that many good men are turning from the churches to-day, it is rather because they have come to feel that the common appeal of the churches is to something lower than the level of their own highest vision. They can no longer think of individual salvation as the be-all and end-all of religion and their own being, and many of them are coming to feel that it is nobler to be damned, if need be, in the effort to save others than to be saved while others perish. This idea of individual salvation, indeed, as the prime concern of life, howsoever it may be stated, does not somehow fit in with that broader view of life to which men are slowly, but surely, coming. Consequently men are finding it increasingly difficult to believe that their chief business in this world is to prepare their souls for another. Men want to know what this world means and what its real tasks and duties are as they relate to their present existence.

The average thinking moral man to-day is not prepared to put his own best impulses and



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aspirations into subjection to any church, priest, or scripture, He has come at last to realize that the true standard of ethics and morals is within, and not without, and to believe that external standards, whether set forth arbitrarily by religion or in any other way, have never been more than the props by which men have been taught to stand and to walk. Now he feels that humanity in the main is capable of standing and walking alone, and if it needs anything it is rather leadership and guidance than authority and command. It is apparent, therefore, that the message of religion can never again reach the heart of men, until it has found some new point of appeal to which to address itself, and this it hardly seems to have yet discovered.

Out of the mighty struggle of life there has developed in man, among other things, a tremendous capacity for endurance, heroism and courage—all the qualities which go to make up the fighting capabilities of man. But of late years, at any rate, religion has made little, if any, demand upon these qualities. Instead of offering men a challenge that will thrill every drop of blood within them, it has sought to commend itself to them as an almost certain road to prosperity and happiness, its aim apparently being to make its appeal as easy and attractive as possible. Certain types of popular evangelism, it is true, make much of pretended demands

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upon men to eschew worldly pleasures and its advocates are unsparing in their denunciation of such things as cards, dancing, and the theatre. But even here there is little real attempt made to link up the energies and capacities of men with the great life struggle of the universe in any conscious or comprehensive fashion. As a matter of fact, indeed, very little of the preaching of popular evangelism reveals any sort of consciousness on the part of its preachers of the life struggle and what it has involved. For the most part the basis of evangelistic appeal must be sought in the old fear of future consequences. So that the eschewing of the things condemned by popular evangelism becomes little more than an act of crudely prudential commercialism, and in none of its appeals is there anything that constitutes a real challenge to the instinct in man which sends him out to the hardships and heroisms of the battle-field. At best its appeals can do little more for men than run their lives into the groove of a narrow and puritanical pietism where their opportunities for the exercise and display of the fighting instinct are, if anything, but the more restricted.

To the average person to-day religion, as presented by the churches, appears a comparatively cheap and easy thing that makes little or no demand upon the heroic qualities or the latent fighting instincts that reside in man and that

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from time to time surge up within us all. I do not put this forth as a mere assertion. It is a fact, I believe, that is capable of very easy demonstration. Take any English or American city as an example. Would it not be an exceedingly difficult matter for any ordinarily intelligent outsider coming to a new city to say just how much religion means to its average churchgoer, or to determine with any degree of accuracy exactly *what* religion means to the average churchgoer?

On the face of things it can certainly be said that religion does not appear to mean anything very strenuous or exacting. What real demand does the average church to-day make upon its individual members? Does it hold up before its members anything that can be said to constitute a serious challenge? Suppose any ordinarily respectable and law-abiding man not previously connected with a church were to become part of the congregation of one of the large and fashionable churches, would he be conscious, do you think, of any new demand being made upon him that was not already being made by the general conventions of good society and respectability? He would be expected, no doubt, to attend its services more or less frequently—but church-going is still a recognized part of social propriety in many cities, and may therefore mean much or little. And he would doubtless be expected further to manifest his

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sincerity of interest by at least a minimum measure of financial support, just as in joining any sort of an organization he would be expected to meet certain dues and monetary obligations incidental to the maintenance of its activity. And if he happened to be generous by nature and possessed of adequate means he would no doubt find before very long that generous subscriptions in church-life as elsewhere bring their own reward in official recognition and advancement to the affairs of executive administration, if it be right to speak of these things as rewards.

In some instances also, though the number of such instances is becoming increasingly fewer, he might find that there was required of him a tacit acceptance of certain theological creeds and a general acceptance of the particular ecclesiastical polity of the particular church he was seeking to join. But would his acceptance of any of these things be felt by him to make any really new and important demand upon his nature? Would the acceptance of the creeds, doctrines, and ecclesiastical polity of any ordinary church to-day involve for the really respectable and law-abiding citizen any radical revolution in the general method of his business operations, any striking change in his common social relationships?—would their acceptance constitute anything that can be really called a demand, not to say challenge? Do not misunderstand me,

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I am not seeking to condemn the average church-goer, still less to criticize unduly or harshly any one church. All I am trying to do is to force home the question—What real demand does religion to-day in its conventional appeals make upon any one of us ?

Is there anything in the common demand of present-day religious appeal that is at all comparable with the demand that is made upon a man when the nation of which he is a citizen finds itself involved in the life-and-death struggle of a great conflict—anything that constitutes anything like a parallel challenge to a man's courage, heroism and capacity for sacrifice ? When a nation issues its call to the colours there is that in its challenge which awakens an inherent response in the hearts of its citizens and which convicts of inward cowardice the man who for any other than the best reasons refuses response. Is there anything in the demand of religious appeal to-day at all parallel to this ? Can we honestly say that the appeal of religion as now presented constitutes a definite challenge to every heroic quality of a man's being ?

Suppose war were banished from the face of the earth, is there anything in the demand of religion as we are nowadays acquainted with it that could provide an outlet for the magnificent qualities of manhood that are the one redeeming glory of the battle-field ? Does religion



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offer us anything that would seem to us worth suffering for—worth dying for? Is there anything religion is actually inspiring men to suffer and die for at the present time? In the great European War men are bleeding and dying for vague ideals of Fatherland and Motherland and for what they believe is the cause of freedom and liberty. Are men anywhere dying in the same way for religion and for what religion means—unless we assume that in these sacrifices they are inspired by religion, which seems somewhat doubtful?

I hope I do not misjudge things, but it does seem to me that the appeal of popular religion is directed more to human self-interest and the low instincts of fear than to anything else, and that in the ordinary appeals of religion as voiced from pulpit and platform there is very little, if anything, that can be said to constitute a definite challenge to the endurance and grit of full-blooded men. The dominant note of practically all the revival preaching of the day, endorsed as it is by an overwhelming majority of American churches, is summed up in the suggestion so vividly illustrated by evangelists and preachers that life at best is brief and uncertain and that it affords our one hope of securing immortal peace and happiness. Denizens of a sin-blighted world, it is for us to get on the right side of God and square the account of our offences

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against Him as quickly as we can, or it will be the worse for us if we die unsaved.

Oh, the empty shallowness of it all in the light of the great agonizing blood-sweating struggle of life of which we have spoken ! Oh, the impotence and artificiality of it all, that religion should centre men's minds on the petty business of saving their own souls while on sea and land men are giving their lives in willing sacrifice for nation and country, and while God is pouring out Himself in the great anguish of life's intense and unceasing struggle. If religion is to mean anything to the future life of mankind, and if it is to retain the respect and attention of men, it must strike some great new note of challenge that will chord with the life struggle of the universe—must offer itself to men as a means whereby they can give rather than get—must face men with a task that will demand the utmost of which they are capable in the way of endurance, courage, heroism and sacrifice.

No true man is greatly troubled about saving his soul. What men are troubled about is how they can make life here and now count, and count for something that they can really feel is worth while. It is all very well going to church and singing psalms, listening to trained, paid choirs and conventional sermons, but if it is all to end there then religion can no longer hope to count for much in the modern world. As a

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form of Sunday recreation for people who lack red blood, or are piously inclined, or prefer music and sermons one day a week to golf and the automobile, religion may continue to exist for some time to come, but if that is all it is going to mean it can no longer hope to count as anything of a factor in the lives of the people who are shaping the policies and doing the real work of the world.

If religion is really to count then there must be something in its message, something both in the hymns we sing and in the sermons we hear that will cause the blood in men's veins to tingle and their hearts and minds to throb with new purpose and passion—something that will be a real challenge not only to the intellectual ability of the mind, but to every moral nerve and fibre of our being. We need (it is the most imperative need of the age) a revival of religion, and we need it infinitely more in our churches and the organizations of our religious activity than we need it in the world at large. We need men in the ministry of the churches to whom that ministry will be not "a soft job" and an easy, though none too lucrative, profession, but men to whom the ministry of religion will appear as a "live man's job." Religion must needs be reborn, and when it is really reborn in our churches the world will be found ripe and ready for the great challenge the churches will then be

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vigorous enough to utter. The world outside the churches will never take religion seriously until the churches themselves take it seriously and find in it a mighty inspiration and challenge to heroic effort and struggle.

It is the pathetic lament of many an earnest man to-day that when he asks of the churches, "What can I do?" their only answer is, "Come to church on Sunday and be as good as you can the rest of the week," or, "Believe this or believe that and the world will find its own way to its finish and you at least will be saved," or, "Here's a Sunday School Class of growing lads, see if you cannot save their souls by inducing them to accept the dogmas of our sect." The churches themselves must get a new grip upon life and a new vision and understanding of its necessities before they can ever find voice for the demand that will challenge the heroism of modern mankind. Democracy, freedom, humanity—these words with the movements they represent can have meaning only as life here and now and in all its manifestations is seen to have vital and intense significance. And it surely has such significance if God be the God of the struggle we have tried to depict. But you cannot revive religion by pumping artificial enthusiasm into lethargic and half-dead institutions. A true revival of religion can only come as some great new conviction

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takes hold upon the minds of men and enables them to see a new reason for effort and a new task toward which to direct it ; or as some old and forgotten truth forces itself once more upon the attention of men and supplies the basis for a new passion and a new and purposeful endeavour. The thing the world is really languishing for to-day is a clear and convincing and vital sense of God. God is no longer recognized as a present reality in our lives. Men and women can tell you what God meant to their grandparents and sometimes to their parents, but they cannot tell you in at all the same way what God means to them.

To many to-day the word " God " is no more than the symbol for an object of thought. They conceive of God as a something to be puzzled out, very much in the manner of a problem in mathematics. Even theologians are sometimes guilty of approaching the problem of God as a problem and purely from the intellectual standpoint, as though God were primarily and supremely an object of thought. There are others, I am afraid, to whom the word " God " means no more than a name for the sum-total of their beliefs and inherited superstitions—a something to believe in, a sort of postulate of faith, which they first take for granted and then proceed to dogmatize about to the full limit of their enthusiasm, zeal, or bigotry. Some of these people



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may even deny that God is an object of knowledge, or ever can be, but He is an object of faith, they say. Which often means that He is just the backbone of their theology—a sort of necessary premise to an argument, a something we must take for granted without attempt at definition and make the foundation of our thinking. But it is all a matter of belief, and the God of whom they speak is primarily an object of faith, just as God to the intellectualist is primarily an object of thought. And in all of this there is very little sense of God as a vital present reality with the most intimate meanings for every man's life and the most vital interest in every man's actions. It has not always been so, I fancy. In the old far-off days of early religious history in ancient Israel men felt that in fighting their battles they were actually fighting the battles of the Lord and that He was their true leader in the conflict. (Crude? Granted, but vital all the same.) Both then and since, ay, even in the early days of the Puritan colonization of New England, men believed that in building their kingdoms they were establishing a government under the direct sovereignty of God Himself, and in that thought found a mighty impulse and inspiration.

But all this has now changed and with the breakdown of the older thought of God (a breakdown far more complete than most people realize)

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has gone in large measure the old sense of divine service and the old belief in actual divine inspiration and co-operation.

The earnest modern man, with all his marvellous capacity and wonderful ingenuity, is no longer conscious of a vital relationship between the activities which engross his attention and the God we hear about in our churches. He may still feel, though the number who still so feel seems to be rapidly decreasing, that worship and homage as part of a church service is something which he owes to a mysterious power which he makes no pretence of understanding. In church on Sunday, in decreasing numbers, you may still find him repeating the phrases and making the motions of an ancient faith that has lost its vitality for him, but when he goes to his office, or factory, or counting-house on Monday it is with no deep conviction that he goes thither to further the work of the God he has sought to worship the day before. It is with no clear consciousness that the God he yesterday sought to worship has to-day need of his toil of brain and muscle.

How often on every hand, and in the churches perhaps more than anywhere else, do we hear the sad lament that the men who are doing the real work of the world—engineering its politics, prosecuting its commerce, developing its industry and organizing its inventions—are only loosely

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identified with the work of the churches, if they are identified at all. Some of these men, of course, are still generous contributors to church finances, sometimes out of a friendly wish to please their wives, sometimes because they have not the heart to turn down appeals for money that are made with all the importunity of deserving charities, and sometimes because they may still incline to a belief that perhaps after all the churches do help to buttress the morality of weaker men and women, who lacking in strength of character might otherwise become a nuisance, if not a menace, to society. Only in comparatively rare cases, I fancy, does their interest and support imply any strong conviction of the vital effectiveness of the churches as a factor in the future development and progress of mankind.

And why is this so? Certainly not because your average great man in the business of the world is a careless cynic, or a flippant sceptic. In innumerable instances these men are toiling with a persistence, industry and heroism that is out of all proportion to the prospects of personal gain, and are spending both themselves and their means in a service that is a thousand-fold more unselfish than is sometimes admitted. What, then, is their reason for this common indifference to the work of the churches? Why is it these men do not make the work of the churches their own and apply themselves to it with more serious

devotion ? The main reason, I believe, is because the churches themselves are unable to show any really vital relation between such men's toil and the profounder things with which religion is supposed to deal. The fact is the old God-views of the churches, perpetuated past their season, have made it all but impossible to link up the toil of such men (or even the toil of the humblest drain-digger and ploughman) with the outreach and struggle of the Life-Force of the universe and to show any direct connection between what is called in common parlance the things of earth and the things of heaven. It is the churches that have taught men to believe that religion is one thing and the business of the world's real work another. And back of it all, and as the prime reason of the failure and mistake of the churches in these matters, lie the limitations imposed and perpetuated by the older thought of a God remote and distinct from the real struggle of life.

But I believe the rebirth of religion is coming—coming in this great new conviction that is growing up in the minds of men to-day that God is not the monarch of a distant court and throne, or a far-off creator of the world, but the ever present Life-Force of all that is and is to be ; the God of the struggle ; the Eternal Toiler in mankind and the universe. And in the strength of this great conviction religion, I

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believe, will find its new note of appeal to the world and a new and noble challenge that will command the attention and win the allegiance of all who are worthy to be called toilers for the world's good. For what does this new conviction mean? It means that God is no longer in His heaven and that all's right with the world, but that God is in the struggle, fighting to win larger victories, toiling to bring into being a larger right than the world has ever yet known, and that He NEEDS US and all the help that we can give to the effort.

It means that religion can no longer be a matter of mere pleasant social functions and fraternities, a mere conventional routine of either simple or ornate worship, a mere matter of giving our money in large or small amounts, a mere matter of winning others to a particular and accepted system of creeds and beliefs, but that religion must be for us all an inspiration to effort, an impulse to toil, a challenge to heroism in all the mighty tasks of the age in which we live.

It means that life is a tremendously greater responsibility than we have ever yet understood it to be and that no bit of real toil or patient effort stands unrelated to the great outreach and upward movement of the universe and life. It means that we have a real part to play in the destiny of things and in the march and progress of unfolding



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life. It means that we must find God not alone, or even primarily, in our sacraments, but in the daily toil and task of effort—our ever present comrade and fellow-worker.

It means that we shall no longer see things in their bearing upon our own happiness and well-being, and think that this is the only thing that matters, but that we shall see things in their relation to all that happiness and well-being can anywhere mean to conscious life. It means that we shall no longer see ourselves as mere creatures of the dust and a day, craving immortality as a gift of grace, but that we shall see ourselves as toilers for eternity, helping to blaze the path and clear the road and lay the foundations of the new and shining way to the glory of the future that is to be.

It means that we shall see in the sin and want and death that round us lie, not the marks of an ancient fall and the penalty of a primal sin, but the task and challenge of advancing life and a new incentive to the toil and sacrifice of righteousness.

Your life and mine, viewed separately, may not seem to amount to much, but if we are actual fellow-labourers with God in a great outreach and effort of which all cosmic struggle is a part,—what a difference it makes ! Can we not see what it means if this new conception of a toiling, struggling God and this new conviction of His

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need of our help become the basis of a new religious appeal ?

It means that we are not simply here in this world by chance and with nothing particular to do but save our own souls for a future world. It means that each one of us is the product of all this mighty struggle of the past and that we are here to carry its achievements yet higher. It means that we are real partners with God in the work of the world and that God needs every ounce of effort, will, and grit that we are capable of putting into life.

We have been created out of the mighty struggle to give it new point and power and direction, and the tasks before us are many and mighty. All this tremendous capacity of the human mind, this will in man to conquer, this genius for invention and discovery, this power to dream dreams and see visions and to weave morals and ethics out of our relationships and what they involve, this amazing adaptability for voluntary sacrifice, this sublime power to plan and organize and direct the mighty forces of physical energy into purposeful channels—all this mighty capacity of the human hand and brain is the material upon which God Himself depends for the future and further development of life, and it is out of all this alone that there can come that future triumph which will justify the anguish and effort of the struggle that has been.

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We are not here to win a future heaven of idle and selfish blessedness for ourselves. We are here to help the universe to win a mighty triumph that will cause the stars in their courses to ring with the joy of the Life-Force victorious. What is it the common soldier of any belligerent army fights for ? Is it a mere soldier's pay and glory for himself—the chance of a promotion and a recognition of merit ? A soldier's pay a soldier, of course, must have, and a soldier's glory he may well yearn to win, but he is a poor soldier who fights alone for these, and it is for something infinitely bigger and more impersonal that the true soldier fights, even for the honour of his flag and the victory of his nation. It is to the service and cause of the victory of the whole of which he is part that he gives himself, and until he does he is of but little use. And so it must be with us all in life. A nation does not spend itself in training and disciplining an army merely to provide its soldiers with bread or the chance of winning a passing glory, it does it for some mightier purpose that it believes is vital to the stability of its government or policy. It may be mistaken in this, as nations often are, but as least it must believe that it is so. Nobody proposes that any nation should “prepare” to-day in order to find jobs for a few men who aspire to the offices of military control, nor in order to provide bread and butter maintenance for the deserving unem-

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ployed—there are cheaper and better ways of doing this if this were all that is involved.

Can any one, then, think that we have been created out of this mighty struggle of the universe merely to build a few churches, chant a few psalms, preach or listen to a few sermons, and win a seat for ourselves in the celestial glory of some far-off heavenly court? I tell you the universe had need of us or we would never have been, and had need of all the capacity of mind and will that have been brought to being in us, and still has need of it. Humanity is not a mere plaything for the amusement of God, it is a necessity of the will of God. He needs every bit of energy and intelligence and every bit of conscious purpose and genuine human feeling that we can put into life. This latest war has been a mighty revelation of the amazing capacity and endurance of man and of his astounding resources of courage and ingenuity. Do you think that all this means nothing and that it is mere chance that it has grown up out of the struggle of the past? It cannot be. All this is needed—is necessary to God and to the universe—and the pity is that it should all be so wasted by man in warring upon man while the urgent necessities of the cosmic struggle wait upon its relation to and devotion to the effort of the ages.

Life has always meant an intensity of effort and struggle, and it means it still, and religion's

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## *Do we Need a New Idea of God ?*

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new appeal must needs be a challenge to the utmost of which humanity is capable. All men's old-time thoughts of placating God and winning His forgiveness and favour, of propitiating God with sacrifices and pleasing Him with ceremonies, as the chief end of religion have come out of men's fears and superstitions. There is no need for men to spend their time whining about being miserable sinners and lost and undone creatures. The way to atone for sin, if you are conscious of it, is to achieve righteousness, and if a man feels that he can't do that he had better shut up and be done with it until somebody shows him that he can. God doesn't need our tears—He needs our strength, our will, our pluck, our grit, our courage, our life. Saint or sinner, He needs to-day everything that you and I can put into life, everything that we can do to help on the struggle of the universe.

He needs the brains of the scientist, the skill of the mechanic, the ingenuity of the inventor, the toil of the toiler, the genius of the organizer, the eye of the artist, the voice of the statesman, the oratory of the spokesman, the daring of the adventurer, the intrepid courage of the navigator, the patient fidelity of the drudge, and the unsung heroism of the obscurest soul—needs them all that upon the colossal foundations already laid there may be reared the shining walls and glittering towers of a yet more mighty universe, a universe



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## *The Need for a New Religious Appeal*

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resonant not alone with the majestic thunder of physical forces, but with the music of moral harmony and ethical sweetness.

Do you tell me that all this will mean a stern and sombre appeal on the part of religion and one that will offer but little comfort in sorrow and little, if any, joy in sacrifice? I know not what to say of comfort in sorrow, for it is hard enough to find real comfort in sorrow anyway, and we are all too wont to cuddle our sorrows to our hearts, as children cuddle dolls when they go to bed. But as for joy in service and in sacrifice the reverse if anything is the truth. For a religion sounding the note of this new and high appeal will be a religion lighted by all the joy of true creative effort. Joy is not an afternoon confection of the parlour, it is a fruit of the victory of effort. There is a joy of battle and a joy of struggle and a joy of toil that eclipse anything of which we think in our softer moods. Joy? There can be no joy in life to compare with the joy men will know when they feel themselves fighting alongside the God of the struggle and realize that they are partners in the building of a universe.

When a man sees every bit of real toil he can carry through and every bit of real effort he can put forth expanded until it relates itself to the great struggle and outreach of life he will know then something of the joy of creative impulse,

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something of the joy the artist feels as he adds another touch to his masterpiece, something of the joy the poet feels as he adds another line to immortal song, something of the joy the builder feels as he sees the light strike on the pinnacle of bridge or building, something of the joy of God Himself as He first looked upon a man, when the stars of the morning sang together.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE NEW AT-ONE-MENT

EVER since the sixteenth century the word "atone-ment" has been in common use in religious circles as perhaps the most popular designation for the work of Christ, though it is a remarkable fact that nowhere in the New Testament is the word so applied or used, and still more remarkable that in no single instance is Jesus Himself ever reported to have so designated His life's work. The word "atonement" occurs in the New Testament only in the Authorized Version of Romans 5 : 11, where later revisers, as theological writers themselves admit, have rightly abandoned its use and substituted a word that corresponds more closely with the original, the word "reconciliation." It is also a striking fact, in view of the prominence of the doctrine and the use of the word "atonement" in religious thought, that no theory of atonement has ever become an official article of faith in the creed of any church. While it has been quite commonly believed that

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Jesus did something in His life and especially in His death that made possible the establishment of a new fellowship between God and man, theological speculation in this matter has never been able to settle upon any permanent definition or formula of the work accomplished. Indeed in the case of no other great doctrine of faith is there so much evidence of unsettlement and changing opinion.

The earliest roots of this doctrine apparently run back far beyond New Testament times to the thought-forms of early Semitic peoples, known to us to-day chiefly through their influence upon the religious thought and worship of ancient Israel. In its earliest forms the doctrine took its shape from a sense that man is absolutely dependent upon God, perhaps one should rather say, from a feeling that in some special and peculiar sense man belongs to God, God having a sort of proprietary right over man. This feeling led the worshipper to believe that he must act toward his god as he would toward an earthly master and that it was an unseemly thing for him to come before his god with empty hands. Thus the offering or sacrifice with which the early worshipper appeared before the altar was conceived as an acknowledgment of divine sovereignty, a tribute of rightful homage.

Traces of an even more primitive and less coherent conception, it is claimed by some, may

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## *The New At-one-ment*

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be traced in the Old Testament, the basis of this more primitive conception apparently being the belief that the gods like men require food, and the altar sacrifice was made with this in view. Then men came to think that what the gods feed upon is not so much the material nourishment that sustains men, but the odour of the burnt offering presented in sacrifice. Naturally therefore the worshipper as this idea developed would choose for his offering the choicest and best of his possessions. It is remarkable, however, that in all of this there was an entire absence of an idea of substitution or penal satisfaction, especially so since in later developments of the doctrine substitution and penal satisfaction have come to play so large a part.

To make propitiation for sin in early times it was necessary, so it was believed, to cause God to become propitious; that is, it was necessary to win his favour, and this one might do by offering Him savoury food, or other things that might be supposed to be pleasing. Needless to say, the rise of the prophetic school in Israel marked so far as that nation was concerned a great protest against these superstitious and barbarous ideas.

The earliest definite Christian theory of atonement, so ecclesiastical historians avow, and one which became the current and leading orthodox doctrine of the church for upwards of a thousand



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years, was that Jesus delivered men from sin and the wrath of God by paying a ransom on their behalf to the devil, who was conceived as the rightful lord and owner of the fallen race of mankind. With the coming of St. Anselm, in the eleventh century, this form of the doctrine of atonement was radically inverted and from this time on to the Reformation the theory was that the ransom or satisfaction paid by Jesus on the Cross was paid not to the devil, but to God. Anselm's argument was that so great is the enormity of sin that it required an infinite satisfaction if God was ever to release the sinner from his bonds ; this satisfaction was due to God from man and could justly be offered by no other, nevertheless, it could be offered by no one inferior to God, and so for this reason it was held God Himself became man in the person of Jesus in order to enable humanity to satisfy Him for its sins.

With the Reformation came further modifications of this doctrine, due mainly to the introduction into religious thought of legal analogies. Now it was held the satisfaction that was due to God on account of the sins of men consisted in a full punishment of their sins, and it was claimed that what Jesus did was to take the place of sinners in the sight of God and as their substitute bear the punishment that was due to them, which punishment, so many thought, included the

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literal pains of hell. Upon Jesus fell all the punishment of all the sins of the human race for which He died, and against the race thereafter penal justice, therefore, could hold no further claim.

In time, however, this theory of penal substitution was again felt to be inadequate, perhaps because it seemed to leave no room for genuine forgiveness on the part of God, since what is once punished cannot afterward be ever truly forgiven, and so there developed a later governmental theory. The main point of this theory was that Jesus was not actually punished for the sins of men, but that He endured on their behalf a measure of suffering which God as a righteous ruler was justified in accepting as a sufficient substitute for the punishment due. By this means, the theory argued, the honour of God's law and government was sufficiently vindicated to make forgiveness consistent with the maintenance of a righteous law.

Many traces of this theory are still to be found in the cruder revival preaching of the present day, and its general arguments are often still in evidence in the teaching of the more evangelical churches of Christendom. Even this stage, however, is far from representing finality in the development of atonement doctrines, and side by side with its perpetuation may be found traces of further developments that may be roughly

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grouped under the head of what one theological writer has called "Moral Influence" theories. The main tendency of these Moral Influence theories being that the real work of Jesus consisted in a revelation of the heart of God, which revelation is not intended to remove obstacles to forgiveness on the side of God (of this there is no need) but primarily to bring about in men a state of repentance and thus win their love to God.

Even yet, however, there is a tendency on the part of theologians of the more orthodox schools to insist that no theory of atonement can stand which does not admit that reparation to the violated law of righteousness is necessary and inevitable. Dr. James Orr says: "We would dismiss as *infra-Scriptural* all theories which affirm that atonement—reparation to the violated law of righteousness—is not necessary. Christ's work, while bringing forgiveness, conserves holiness, magnifies law, vindicates righteousness. Also defective are theories which seek the sole explanation of atonement in the ethical motive: purely *moral* theories. . . . Scripture recognizes obstacles to salvation on the side of the righteousness of God as well as in man's unwillingness, and atonement aims at the removal of both. It has the aspect of propitiation, of expiation, of *restitutio in integrum*, as well as of moral influence. It is an act of reconciliation,

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embracing God's relation to the world equally with the world's relation to God."\*

For a fuller treatment of the development of atonement theories the reader is referred to a little book on the historical evolution of "The Doctrine of the Atonement" by the late Auguste Sabatier, upon which I have largely drawn in the foregoing outline.

Now it will be plain to the close observer that back of all these atonement theories outlined there lies another theory upon which all alike are based, this theory being that in some way the natural sinfulness of man (which all assume), constitutes an insuperable barrier to any real fellowship or co-operation between man and God, until in some way it can be removed. Before man can ever find salvation, or rise to the enjoyment of a sense of fellowship with God, it is assumed, man and God must needs be morally reconciled. This reconciliation, as the theories we have outlined make abundantly plain, demands and necessitates some sort of intermediary between man and God, and some very definite form of mediation. To put it into every-day English, God and man cannot anyhow come together until something happens—until somebody intervenes

\* Hastings Bible Dictionary (One Volume Edition) Article on Atonement, p. 74.

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between man and God to put God right with man and man right with God.

The most superficial reader can hardly fail to see that in all of this there is not even the faintest conception of the modern thought of God as an immanent Life-Force. A God who needs to be propitiated before He can receive men or forgive men, or a God between whom and mankind the sins of the world stand as an obstacle, is very evidently a God remote from life and its struggles. All these theories of atonement definitely imply an alienation and state of enmity between man and God, and a real barrier existing to hinder free intercourse. Consequently the religion which grows out of them is mainly concerned with devising ways and means by which the alienation may be overcome, or in explaining the ways and means by which it has supposedly already been overcome.

Against this underlying theory of all atonement doctrines—that there exists a natural and inevitable condition of estrangement between man and God—I am compelled to protest with all the emphasis of my being. I do not believe it is true, or ever has been true. Conventional theology, with its doctrines of natural and inherited guilt and sin, has so warped our common views of life that our whole perspective in this matter is false and misleading. It seems to me that the common theological conception of sin



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and the sense of sin is nothing but a fiction of the theological mind—a sort of stage property conceived and created for the sole purpose of giving point and force to the theologian's main drama. To be absolutely frank, I do not believe that any such thing as sin, in the abstract theological sense, exists, or ever has existed. And I certainly do not believe in this so-called natural enmity between man and God. I can find no evidence whatever to justify the thought in the common lives of men to-day. There are plenty of "sinners" in the world to be sure, but not all the world is sinful, nor are any of its "sinners" all the time sinful. There is nothing that has served to cloud the moral sense of men more than this common theological theory that all the world is of necessity under the ban of the guilt of sin and stands in urgent need of reconciliation with God before ever peace and salvation can be assured.

Go to the average "man in the street" and urge him in the language of conventional evangelical theology—"Be ye reconciled to God," and in the majority of cases, if he thinks at all about what you are saying and is equal to putting his real thoughts into words, he will instinctively feel like saying, "What on earth are you talking about?" Such a man is not conscious of any enmity between himself and God, and certainly is not aware of cherishing any feelings of enmity

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toward God. If he spoke his mind freely, indeed, he would almost certainly tell you that if there is any such enmity it must be on God's side and not on his. He is not conscious of ever having quarrelled with God, or of ever having entertained a wish to quarrel. He may have done many foolish things, for which in his better moments he is as sorry as an honest man can be. But if he could be induced to speak about these things he would assuredly tell you that he never did anything in order to displease God and certainly never with any definite sense of trying to estrange himself from God. The greater part of his follies are follies, and nothing more. Even in the case of the so-called "grosser sins of the flesh" many and many a young man walks blindly into folly without ever a thought of deliberate wrong-doing. And will any one dare tell me that when a decent young girl "goes wrong" it is with the deliberate intention of wrong-doing ?

What a cruel caricature of life it is to picture mankind as going about the world shaking a clenched fist in the face of God and breathing out enmity and rebellion against His will ! To any one at all sympathetically acquainted with the history of humanity's struggle in the direction of goodness that is the most brutal of calumnies. And it simply isn't true, as every man might see for himself if he would but look the facts in the face. Ask yourself if it is true of the neighbours

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in your own street as you know them, or of the men and women you meet from day to day in the ordinary affairs of life and business. How many deliberate sinners—how many men and women anxious to quarrel with God, or consciously at enmity with God, can you pick out from the average crowd at a railway station, or among any average audience at a theatre? I have no wish to paint the average man as a saint, and I would be the last person to deny his shortcomings or my own, but on the whole I find the men and women I know genuinely desirous of doing the best they can with their lives, and none of them are at all exceptional men or women. I have every reason to believe that as they are, so are the great majority of self-respecting people the world over.

Human history, indeed, as I read it, is the story of a long and painful search after God and of a sublime outreach toward goodness on the part of men, and not at all the story of a long continued and wilful rebellion against God. With all his imperfections and limitations I cannot think of man as a fallen creature, for it is after all out of man's own continuous struggle in the direction of righteousness and morality that all that the world to-day knows of goodness has been born.

Moral harmony between man and God, as between man and man, is a consummation most

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devoutly to be wished, but for the life of me I cannot see that the interests of such a moral harmony are in any way served by this continual emphasis of our natural condition as that of moral enmity and alienation. It may be very necessary that there should exist a greater sense of at-one-ment between man and God, but it is certainly not necessary that we should be urged to lay down our arms, and make peace with God, for the vast majority of mankind are conscious of no real hostility toward God and goodness, and are guilty of none.

There are, it is true, a certain number of crooks and criminals in the world (for the condition of some of whom society itself cannot be exonerated altogether from blame) and there may be, and doubtless are, a certain number of greedy people without heart or conscience who are always on the look-out for a chance to get the best of some other body, but all of these make up but a very small minority as compared with the great mass of mankind. By far the great majority of men and women the world over are honestly concerned to know what the right is in any crisis which faces them and honestly anxious to do the right as best they know and understand it.

Think of all the millions of the obscure and unsung toilers of life, who struggle on patiently and silently year in and year out, earning only the most beggarly of pittances and with no

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prospect of relief as long as they shall live. Think of all these, I say—miners in the deep dark places of the earth, sailors upon the stormy breast of the seas, men with their hands upon the throttles of engines and upon the handles of the shovels that feed their furnaces with fuel, women at the loom and the mill and the wash-tub, farmers with their feet in the furrows, stokers and stevedores, smelters and puddlers, and peddlers ; men at the desk and in the counting-house, men at the printer's font and at the lino-machine and the monotype-machine, navvies and policemen and porters ; girls at the typewriter and at the piano at the cinemas ; men on the markets and the streets, railway men and tram men, men in the farmyard and the stockyard—men who buy and men who sell and men who furnish the markets with their plenty, men “on the road,” and men who canvass from door to door ; girls at the telephone exchange and girls behind the counter of the department store ; waiters in the hotel and the restaurant, girls in the “chorus,” and men who shift the scenes, tinkers and tailors and butchers and bakers and grocers—think of them all, I say, this mighty multitude of the world's toilers (of whom we can enumerate but a scanty few), eating their bread in the sweat of their brow, or growing pale and thin and anæmic from long and close confinement—some of them “grousing” and “kicking” a bit, all of them doing a little wrong



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and achieving a little right ; some of them snatching their scanty pleasures here and some there, some of them ambitious, some of them listless ; some of them healthy, some of them sickly, some of them old and tired, some of them young and fresh ; some of them careful, some of them careless ; a few of them mean, more of them generous and some of them splendidly noble and brave. . . .

It is all very well for professors in theological easy chairs to talk of men as alienated from God by wicked devices and as living at conscious enmity with God. But will any one dare tell me that all these are alienated from God by wicked devices—that all of these multitudes of the world's toilers are living in open rebellion against God and His will ? Pshaw ! Rubbish ! The thing is too ridiculous for words. It isn't reconciliation with God they are needing, but understanding of God, consciousness of God—a knowledge that God, whose fellow-workers they are, is with them and that every bit of real toil in the world is related to God's own effort and outreach.

All this theological fiction about an abstract sin that has placed its taint upon them, and all this talk about a God who demands satisfaction, if not placation—what does it mean to them, what can it mean to them ? What they need, one and all, is the sense of a real comradeship, a great big divine comradeship to sustain them day by day and make them conscious that the meanest task

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that helps on the real work of the world is worth doing, and worth their doing ; a sense of comradeship that will inspire as well as sustain. And religion can never really be anything to the great mass of the world's toilers until it means this. You can't convince all these toilers that their chief business in life is to insure their souls against the dangers of a future hell in favour of the blessedness of a future heaven. They are not going to believe it, and they don't believe it. They haven't the time nor the energy to spend in thinking about a future world and in finding their way through the intricate mass of speculations of theologians concerning it. Talk to them about Purgatory and Karma and Re-Incarnation and Psychic Phenomena, or about Hades and Sheol and Gehenna and Paradise and you might as well speak in a foreign tongue. What they need to know is that life here and now—the life that at once means so much to them and so little to them—is linked up with and related to the divine. If God or heaven are ever to mean anything to this great multitude they must find that meaning here and now and the meaning must relate itself to the struggle that has now to be waged.

What all the world needs is a new sense of kinship, comradeship, at-one-ment with God in all the toil and struggle of life. The real sense of this word “ atonement ” has been obscured by the misleading uses to which it has been put in con-

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ventional theology. It is not *atonement* at all, it is *at-one-ment*. And this is what the world needs, not a doctrine of atone-ment, but a sense of at-one-ment with God.

The real questions that are troubling thoughtful people to-day are not how in another world they can escape the consequences of their follies, or the follies of their ancestors, but what life here and now really means and how they can give it more point and purpose.

The great new watchwords of our modern business world are themselves giving these questions new point. On every hand the cry is for Efficiency, and the thinking man is bound to ask, Efficiency for what ? To run the business of the world better, of course—he knows this—but to what greater end and in the interest of what real purpose ? The mere interest in money-making does not suffice as an answer, since for none of us is money more than a means to an end. The thing is what does it all mean and what is it all for—this mighty effort and struggle of life that everywhere confronts us ? Has it any real meaning or purpose at all, and, if it has, how can we here and now relate ourselves to its purpose and meaning ?

The preceding chapters of this little book have been taken up with the development of a conception of God that relates itself in the most vital manner to this great question. I have sought to turn my readers' thoughts away from the old ideas

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of God as a king upon a monarch's throne, the remote and transcendent creator and ruler of the world and life, to the thought of God as the God of all the struggle and outreach of life—the real Life-Force of the universe and the eternal toiler in the universe. I have spoken of a God for whom the mighty struggle of life is no mere incident or accident, but a vital necessity of being, and who is this very day fighting out His battles and striving for victory amid the conflict of created things—a God who needs our strength and grit and will and courage far more than He needs our tears and our penitence.

Such a thought of God, I believe, is not only in line with our modern knowledge of how things have come to be and with the most vital facts of our experiences, but it is also in line with the great need of the time for something that will give point and meaning to the struggle that is being waged throughout the universe and in which, whether we will it or not, we must perforce play our part.

Older theological views taught us to regard our world as a fallen world—a world created perfect but that went wrong at the start, and in which all the sin and evil we deplore exist as a necessary result of the fundamental primary blunder of man. God we were taught to believe had very little to do with the world at all, except that its evil was a grief and horror to His holiness and that in miraculous fashion He sought to provide an antidote to

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## *Do we Need a New Idea of God ?*

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the world's evil that so far apparently has failed to work anything in the nature of a permanent or complete recovery. We ourselves, we were taught to think, could do very little with the evil of the world since we are all of us partners in it, and our hope must therefore be to be saved out of the world, since for the world itself there can be but little hope. Is there anything in such views that can give point and meaning to life here and now, anything in which men are ever likely to find strong inspiration for the tasks that await their effort and the struggle that demands their strength ? I think not. Their tendency would rather seem to be to rob life of its meaning and to render pointless anything we may be prompted to attempt for the larger good of the world.

But if the world be not a fallen world ; if instead its history be that of an upward struggle and outreach and if in all its vicissitudes and developments it stands related to one great primal urge and impulse ; if the world instead of being the shattered dream of a disappointed God be rather the achievement and victory of a God in action, a God toiling to create and travailing to bring forth a still more wondrous creation, is there not visible at once a new sort of at-one-ment to be sought and realized by men—an at-one-ment with the God of the Struggle, an at-one-ment with God in the struggle ?

I am jealous for the word at-one-ment because



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## *The New At-one-ment*

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it is one of the few words that express what the modern world really needs, because it indicates so clearly the nature of the new bond that I believe men will yet recognize as existing between themselves and God. Life at its highest means at-one-ment with God. Into this sense of at-one-ment the moral element will naturally enter, but not as the sole and only factor, nor as the one point to the exclusion of all others upon which to fasten attention. Let men but attain to some real sense of oneness with God in the mighty life struggle of the universe and I do not think we shall need to bother much about moral harmony between man and God. That will take care of itself, and it will come of itself as the natural flowering and culmination of a real sense of identity and a real co-operation of effort. Moral problems never stand alone. It is out of other relationships and in the light of other necessities that they arise, and toil and labour are ever the best servants of a true morality. Thomas Edison said recently that he had been too busy to be tempted. And if religion can but issue a challenge that will in any conscious fashion serve to link up the labours of men with the toil of God life's moral problems will be largely solved at once.

The evil of the world is not a moral problem distinct from everything else that exists, and it is not a species of disease that in some peculiar manner offends the susceptibilities of God—it is a mighty obstacle that God Himself must overcome

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in us, and which He is ever seeking to overcome, in order to make possible new growths and new developments of life. We can never find our way to a true at-one-ment with God by any merely negative process, nor by any such simple means as a repentance, or even a repudiation, of the things we have learned to call evil. God and the universe demand the utmost that we can give that is positive and constructive. The positive note—the note of a definitely positive challenge—must be the note of religion's new appeal, if it is ever to inspire a new and true sense of at-one-ment between man and God. "Thou Shalt!" and not, "Thou Shalt Not!" must be the language of its utterance.

Every noble effort in the direction of a larger good brings a man into oneness with God, and men need to know it. Are we on the side of the things that are helping the march and progress of life? This is the question of supreme importance, for if we are, then we are already one with God in the struggle of the universe. There is nothing vague or mysterious about this new at-one-ment. The more consciously we can relate ourselves to the mighty movement of life the more conscious we shall become of our at-one-ment with God.

God is not a long way off, and He is not an offended Deity looking down upon us as offending creatures. He is the God of all this mighty life-struggle, and He has brought us into being in order that through our powers of brain and mind He

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may achieve yet greater victories. He wants our service—He NEEDS our service, and He is urging us by every noble impulse of life to rise up and unite our strength, courage, effort and will to this mighty cosmic effort of the ages. The whole question of our moral harmony with God depends upon just this :—to what extent are we responding to the call of the universe for the service that we can render ? Are we on the side of the universe in its upward urge and its mighty onward outreach, or are we mere parasites sapping the life we were created to enrich ?

Here we are in the midst of life's mighty struggle, born of it and for it—Are we standing amid it all idle and indifferent as to what happens, willing to take what comes however it comes and thinking only of our own safety and happiness ; or are we consciously and deliberately throwing our energies into the struggle on the side of the larger good and the more abundant life that are struggling to win their victory ? It is in these questions that the interest of religion centres, for religion is not a matter of saving the soul for the future, it is a matter of actual identity here and now with God in the struggle of life.

The new at-one-ment means a new and glorious sense of co-operation with God (a consciousness of identity with God, the Life-Force) in every upward struggle of life, and this can only come as we cease thinking of ourselves as lost and fallen

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creatures whose chief concern is to win the favour of an offended monarch and learn to think of ourselves as fellow-labourers with the God of the struggle in the building of a yet more wondrous universe in which all our moral visions and ethical dreams shall be transmuted into the solid substance of an enduring structure.

THE END

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